Price of a barrel of petroleum today: US\$ 46.28

> INSIDE TODAY **WORLD NEWS**

KREMLIN KLASH



Police officers cordon off the area of an anti-Kremlin protest in Moscow, Sunday, Dec. 14, 2008, with a New Year tree in the background. **INTERNATIONAL NEWS B7**

SPORTS NEWS



Annika Sorenstam, left top, receives a farewell gift after the end of the final day of **Dubai Ladies Masters golf** tournament in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Sunday, Dec. 14, 2008. Sorenstam brought the curtain down on her 15-year career Sunday by finishing in a five-way tie for seventh place at the Dubai Ladies Masters.

Sports Today Page B10

RCCL's Enchantment of the Seas celebrates first call in Aruba



ORANJESTAD The Enchantment of the Seas celebrated her first call plaque ceremony in the presence of NV, and SEL Maduro & Sons, the shipping company.

of the Aruba Ports Authority the First Lady of Colombia, Mrs. Lina Moreno de Uribe, spouse of President Alvaro Special guest onboard the Uribe, who disembarked in hours shopping before flying back home.

A total of 2293 cruise guests were onboard the Enchantment of the Seas and according to Mr. Michael Ronan - Vice President, Government Relations, Caribbean Latin America & Asia, all disembarked to take part in the adventure of shore excursions, shopping, and the sampling of the local hospitality.

The consul of Panama, Mrs. Anabel Arends Mojica G. was also present for this occasion. since the Enchantment of the Seas is home porting in Colon, Panama and has amongst others Cartagena, Santa Marta Colombia, Aruba and her sister islands on the itinerary.

Aruba's Taxi drivers celebrate holidays at Hyatt



PALM BEACH - This past Friday evening, Aruba's Taxi drivers joined together for Holiday cheer at the Hyatt Regency Aruba. The group filled the ballroom with laughter and joy as the band roved about the room sharing the popular Holiday songs.

Aruba's visitors often use Aruba taxi services. They are extremely reliable; Aruba's taxis are also less expensive than they are on some other islands. Fares are set by the government, and drivers carry identical rate cards.

To find a taxi, your best bet is to call ahead, these aren't the hail-on-a-street-corner kind of ride.

Continued on Page B3





Monday, December 15, 2008 LOCAL





Builders, architects and contractors raise a beer to the Kaye Home

Lord Spencer Kaye reaches highest point



OPAL - On Friday afternoon, Lord Spencer Kaye reached the highest point of his home being built in Sea View Estates just north of the Marriott Resort. Everyone involved on the project was there to join Lord Spencer in the Dutch tradition of raising a beer and his home country flag to reaching the highest point on his new family home that he will share with his wife Julia and sons Dylan and Nathan.

Sea View Estates is a small community on the North side of Aruba, where the sun likes to linger and where the land meets the most beautiful beaches of the island. A place where people have found the art of relaxation and live in harmony with nature. The houses will be designed and build according to your taste and budget. From 2 bedroom/ 2 bathroom homes up to 5 bedroom/ 4½ bathroom villas. The infrastructure is planned with asphalted roads and paved sidewalks. All the utilities will be underground.

Giovanni di Vecchia of Vecchia Estates can help you build your next home in Aruba nearby the crystal clear powder white sand beaches in a quiet neighborhood.

Photos by Julia Renfro







Aruba's Taxi drivers celebrate holidays at Hyatt









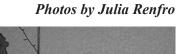
Traveler's Tip: If you're out on the street, recognizing a taxi may not be easy to the untrained eye. Look for "TX"

marking the license plates of Aruba taxis, and you're sure to pick it up easily.

Taxis are one of Aruba's

popular means transportation.

Nearly all of the drivers speak English and have also participated in the government's Tourism Awareness Program, so you can expect a smooth ride when you travel in an Aruba taxi.













Caesar Salad with fresh Caribbean Shrimp and Mandarin orange slices The GIANT crab sampler includes Alaskan King Crab Legs, snow crab legs, fried soft shell crab, stuffed crab back, Maryland crab cake, lemon, tartar sauce, and drawn butter

\$ 34.95 + 15% S.C. + 3% Gov. Tax

Served with rice or baked potato, sour cream, Caribbean polenta and garden vegetables, freshly baked corn bread, soft dinner rolls and Dutch butter.

WATERFRONT CRABHOUSE, Renaissance Marketplace For reservations call: 583-5858 OR 582-0184

This offer not valid with any other offer or coupon

Aruba TODAY

IFA Throws a Holiday Get Together

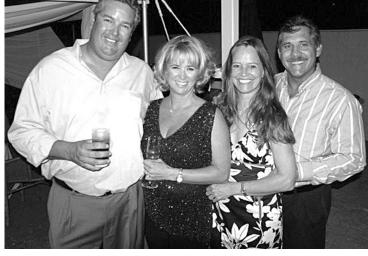


EAGLE BEACH - Tulip restaurant set the stage for the IFA annual holiday party in the garden, with a special seating area under a white tent. Dressed in their holiday finest, members of the International Friends of Aruba enjoyed a welcome champagne cocktail followed by more cocktails from the open bar and a buffet of festive salads and holiday

Tulip, located on Eagle Beach

was picked by outgoing President Clel Douglas, for its casual and friendly ambiance, and efficient service with a Dutch accent.

Clel thanked her friends for their support of her presidency



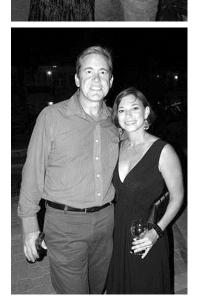
as she introduced the new board with Clare Barrow at the helm.

IFA is a non-profit, nonpolitical, non-denominational organization whose membership is open to individuals and families of all nationalities. Their mission is to advance international understanding, cultural goodwill exchanges and Aruba's multi



national people and to assist new members in achieving a better understanding of island. Contact IFA www.ifaruba.com ifamembership@hotmail.









NIGHT SHOPPING UNTIL 10:30PM

Cold Beer prices ranges from \$2. Souvenirs a wide variety of snacks. Also available Rums made in Aruba at a good price. T-Shirt at \$4. / Aruba bags \$8.

COLD WINE VARITY

Bring this Ad & receive a FREE gift with any purches of \$25.

OPEN DAILY

We're located at walking distance from the High Rise Area. You can get your basic food & drink.

ED AT: 186-D PALM BEACH (next to Dominos Tel: 586-1710 • email: shopngo@setarnet.aw









KICK START YOUR MORNING

Come to Burger King® and order a Croissan'wich® with your choice of sizzling sausage, hot ham or crispy bacon topped with egg and melted American cheese all on a flaky croissant.

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Window On Aruba Hosts Elegant Holiday Party









and Lamb and enjoyed the elegant ambiance of the famed restaurant complemented by fine wine. Windows on Aruba with its exhibition kitchen and panoramic views of the golf course, has been busy during the Christmas season entertaining a great number of local companies and businesses celebrating their annual Christmas parties with gala flair.



DIVI LINKS - Windows on Aruba hosted an outstanding holiday party for Citizen Insurance. Invited guests feastedon Sea Bass, Tenderloin









Buccaneer

Buccaneer Restaurant is an island tradition for over 25 years that serve creative dishes prepared with a European touch with irresistible secret flavorings which continue to lure guests back, again and again. Feast on fresh Caribbean catch in one of the cozy booths with a view of an aquarium at each seat, surrounded by tropical splendor and nautical decor, Our second dining room resembles an underwater cave, complete with a 7,500 gallon saltwater aquarium, unseen elsewhere. Our friendly staff is here to give you the "Welcome Aboard" feeling and the chef-owner will personally take care of you.



Aruba_TODAY

Purple Ribbon Activities











ORANJESTAD - A special campaign which combines fund raising, education and awareness was launched by the Foundation for Women in Difficulty under the slogan No Excuse for Abuse.

The foundation sells purple bracelets and sets up information stations in busy locations to spread the message within the local community.

Some businesses took the initiative even further by organizing their own separate fund raisers.

De Palm Tours organized a flea market and volunteered to clean out closets for charity, resulting in a successful yard sale on the sidewalk in front of the company boulevard headquarters.

The event was flavored with live music of a seasonal gainta band. The Foundation for





Women in Difficulty operates a shelter, served to house women on the run from spousal abuse,

and the facility is completely dependent on donations from the community.







he French Steakhouse Gets a Seasonal Refresh



Eagle Beach - Locals and visitors have been looking forward to the seasonal menu tweak and recharge of the French Steakhouse, under the expert direction of executive chef George Hoek. The good news reached us this week. The master has finally revealed his grand retouch, resulting in a packed dining-room every night of the week.

Among appetizers Chef George now lists his popular classics, Escargot a la Pernod totally sinful and amazingly

and Prosciutto Ham & Melon next to his novel selections, Authentic Aruba Keeshi Yena and Tropical Crab Cakes with pineapple and mango salsa.

The classic menu of the French Steak House received a pepped-up twist, also evident in the salad section featuring a Honey Glazed Salmon Salad and a Hearts of Palm with Roasted Pepper salad.

The menu now boasts more seafood, from fresh fish to the

decadent Caribbean Stuffed Shrimp with Crabmeat and Bacon, which became an instant hit. The tequila and sweet chili glaze, lends the Jumbo shrimp a pure taste of

The famous South American Churrasco steak, a signature preparation, now shares the limelight with juicy USDA beef specialties such as NY Sirloin and Filet Mignon.

And Chef George definitely took the boring out of chicken with his Jerk Curried Skewers and Lemon Herb Broilers.

Open 7 days a week from 5:30 p.m. - 11:00 p.m. the French Steakhouse is blessed with the nicest staff and a delightfully renovated dinning room with sparkling China, crisp linen, an interesting bread basket, colossal desserts and live jazz on piano with Eddy Samson. Hungry patrons will appreciate the Ambassador's 5-couse menu featuring the run for the menu highlights for just





\$34.95 per person. At the Manchebo Beach Resort

& Spa, on Eagle beach.

Giorgio's Ristorante Italiano delivers authentic Italian flavors



Manchebo Beach Resort -- Italian food lovers needn't walk far. Giorgio's Ristorante Italiano is located within walking distance of all low-rise resorts, on Eagle Beach, at the charming Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa.

The Manchebo's Executive George Hoek concocted an irresistible menu of Italian classic specialties with a contemporary feel, served al fresco, on the garden terrace or around the tropical pool.

From Anti Pasti to Insalata, Zuppa to Pesce, the menu welcomes diners with familiar recipes, such as Bruschetta di Carciofi, Calamari Fritti, Melanzane All'Agro Dolce, Minestrone, Salmone Affogaro in Bianco and the Pescatore, starring the bounty of the Sea, which distinctly demonstrates the talents of Executive Chef George Hoek, a master of flavorful sauces, delicious combinations and delightful presentations

At the heart of the menu, the Pasta section, delivers a nice variety to be shared by two or enjoyed unabashedly solo – go ahead, you only live once - with Fettuccini Alfredo, Penne All'Arrabiatta and Tortellini ala Gorgonzola, just to name a few.

Pizza appears on Giorgio's menu for those craving thin crusts and ample toppings, with a selection of classic pies made to order and served with a genuine Italian accent. Angelo, the Maitre D is Italian, naturally.

Giorgio's Piatti Principali feature a hit parade of dishes, which make it very difficult to decide between Cotoleta alla Parmigiana, Petto di Pollo Saltimbocca and Costolette D'Angelo alla Cacciatore. Giorgio's Osso Bucco will have you sighing with great satisfaction as you heap the braised veal shanks flavored with herbs and a red wine reduction, escorted by potato gnocchi, onto your fork and get lost in the symphonic, robust flavors.

Chef George says General Manager Edgar Roelofs, is an incredibly valuable addition to our team as his food is divine, and his desserts deserve a special article on their own!

To check things out yourselves, call Giorgio's at the Manchebo Beach Resort. It is open for dinner nightly.



Pega Pega Café & Beach Bar perfects beach cuisine



Eagle Beach – Pega Pega Café & Beach Bar at the Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa recently unveiled its new lunch & cocktail menu, conceived and presented by executive chef George Hoek.

True to his Sun Splashed Cuisine promise, the chef delivered a contemporary menu, listing favorite dishes from around the world, deriving inspiration off US, Mexican, Thai, Jamaican, Cuban, Greek and Mediterranean menus, all served with a tropical, Caribbean flair.

For starters Wings on Fire, Chicken Quesadilla and Nacho Chips & Cheese, are served in abundance, garnished and accompanied by delicious dips.

Chef's Sun-Sational Salads feature fresh and healthy ingredients brimming with authentic flavors.

The Blue Mermaid heaps sliced mango and banana on mixed greens, onions, and peppers with caramelized walnuts, sprinkled with lemon and pepper vinaigrette, competing with a terrific Shrimp Salad, flavored with Jamaican jerk spice, papaya salsa and ginger cream dressing for the honor of being the #1

The sandwich board is equally inventive as Cudarebo Tacos translate into flour tortillas filled with seared filet of grouper, garnished with diced tomato, served with fruits and a garlic-cumin aioli. The Cuban pressed Chicken Sandwich with cilantro adobbo, served on foccacia roll topped with melted Swiss cheese, gives the Mediterranean Grilled Vegetable Wrap competition, on the list of jawbreakers.

Most original creation on the refreshing lunch menu is the Grilled Grouper Rueben Sandwich on brown rye bread, topped with sauerkraut, Thousand Islands dressing, capped with melted Swiss cheese, served with French fries.

While Chef Hoek went out of his way to bring novelty to mid-day platters, the classics also make an appearance on his menu starring oversize Beef Burgers, Philly Cheese Steak Sandwiches and Hot Dogs.

The Pega Pega tropical & frozen cocktail list, with fresh fruit or ice cream smoothies, daiguiris, coladas and margaritas, leaves nothing out, including Yellow Birds, Sex on the Beach and Mudslides, making a lunch-time brain-freeze, extremely easy to get!

The Pega Pega, one of Aruba oldest beach bars is open on fabulous Eagle Beach, with unrivaled views, caring, gracious service, and relaxed atmosphere, from 12 noon to 5 p.m. The bar opens at 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.





Enjoy wonderful cuisine as you dine in this unique American steakhouse with a Caribbean flair.

Two diverse culinary worlds are offered: exotic Caribbean food and cowboy-size servings of USDA-certified Black Angus Beef.

Special offer: Pay just 1/2 price for the first bottle of wine any Tuesday from 6-7:30p.m., with a three-course dinner, two persons minimum.



ristorante

Italian zest for living adds a unique

Ristorante. "Bevenuti" to our Old

flavor to your dinner at Baci

Enjoy a free birthday dinner

(food only, three-course dinner)

with a minimum of four persons

Country piazza.

Special offer:

- ID required.

baci



An epicurean delight located in a romantic setting on a sugary sand beach with a golden glow of a sunset as a backdrop.



For the best breakfast buffet on the island, start your day right!

THE WESTIN

Discover the island's premier collection of dining options

New Havana entertains....while you wait for your plane Why wait at the airport?

AIRPORT -When one travels, expect to wait and to wait. well when I fly I check in 3 hours beforehand, and then it's a one minute cab ride to my waiting room. While everyone gets al sweaty and agravated at the airport, I enjoy my last hours of sun and sand. When the plane comes in in front of your eyes you get the check and board your plane. Sounds like a plan? Yes indeed! The staff is ever so friendly and does the job in a very impressive way, under the watchful eye of GM Antoin lenting and Executive Chef Daan Sluys they bring great service with a big smile in a Asian Wok restaurant with a spectacular panoramic Ocean view, and a wide variety menu, offers a delicious 4 course dinner Wok special menu plus a gourmet selection of dishes, such as filet Mignon etc, and exotic Sushi options as well. A unique open air ambiance, great view, under a huge real Palapa one step away from the Caribbean Sea.

Our professional Wok chef will prepare an Asian Wok dinner right at the moment you order.

Chillout Grill restaurant offers an easy island menu, from beach Burger, ribs with barbecue, Soto

soup and more, with a light blue and

white décor, marine tables, right next

to the bars is the place for breakfast,

and lunch whole day long. Beach ca-

tering service from Chillout grill is

also available, great location for your

office Get-together, birthday or other

Lounge Bar offers a big selection of

special celebrations as well.

Caribbean cocktails that will make you have fun and dance the Aruban rhythm under the starts. Lounge bar is great for an after work toast, chat with friends, or just to sip your drink while enjoying of a beautiful beach day. 'We have life music with DJ, Saxophonist and life band entertainment every week.



Specials (wok special from 5 to 6 everyday, Chillout from 11

Lounge Bar Happy hour from 5 to 6 pm: \$3,25 per local

Asian Wok Special, mix wok + rice + local beer or soft drink

Chillout executive lunch, sandwich + salad + coffee or

Opening hours Asia Wok opens from Monday to Sunday from 5:00 to 10:00 pm

Chillout Grill from Monday to Sunday from 9 am to 10:00 pm

Lounge Bar from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm (or later)

RESORT ARUBA

For hours of operation and reservations please call tel 297.586.4466

Valid through the months of September & October 2008.

Red Sail Sports Aruba for all sail cruises

With Red Sail Sports Aruba Sunset Sailing along Aruba's scenic Coastline

PALM BEACH – Red Sail Sports is excited to let everyone know about its Catamaran Sailing program. A perfect combination of romance and relaxation, the moonlight sail along the scenic Aruban coastline offers food, drinks, music and more. Nibble on tantalizing snacks while you sit back and enjoy the sounds of live Caribbean music. The open bar offers a variety of tropical cocktails, including some Aruban specialties – be sure to ask the friendly crew for a Captain's Special! Aruba's trade winds provide

you can set sail on Red Sail

Sports' fun-filled Luncheon

or Afternoon Snorkel Trips.

kids of all ages and brings



guests to all the best snorkeling spots in Aruba, including Aruba's most famous snorkel spot – the wreck of the Antilla where you can see yellowtail snapper, angelfish, blue head wrasse and dozens of other tropical fish. Red Sail Sports also offers a Sunset Sail where you can relax with the ideal conditions for sailing a cocktail and enjoy the spectacular all day long aboard Red Sail Aruban sunset. A Sunset Sail is truly Sports top quality, well main- the best way to watch the sun go tained catamarans. If a sunset down on your Caribbean holiday.

sail is a little late for the kids, To make reservations or for more information call Red Sail Sports at 586-1603, visit your hotel concierge or your Red Sail Sports rep-The Snorkel Sails are safe for resentative at the Hyatt, Allegro, Marriott and Renaissance Resorts.

Casa Tua makes the best pizzas; period.

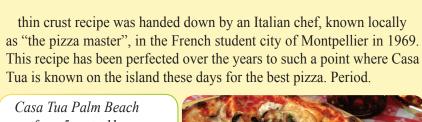
a recipe perfected over thirty years

Casa Tua draws a crowd of local and not-so-local folks who can't seem to get enough of the pizza and the place. There's almost always a wait here, even if you have reservations, so place yourself at the bar with the smell of brick oven pizzas wafting to other tables, and knowing that at some point, that bliss will be yours. Al fresco dining is designed with a chicly rustic feel. The atmosphere is cool and relaxed, "Casa Tua" meaning "Your Home" in Italian.

With a Sicilian-style thin crust, dripping with cheese and fresh-made tomato sauce, this pizza comes with a variety of toppings in the meat and veggie categories. Pasta dishes, full Italian meals like Lasagne and veal Osso Buco, fresh salads

and rich desserts are also Casa Tua's famous secret Downtown: 588 5695

on the menu.



open from 5pm to 11pm. Casa Tua Downtown open from 11am to 11pm, on Sunday from 5pm to 11pm. For more information or reservations Palm Beach: 586 8470







Get ready for a close and personal encounter with huge, prehistoric birds! The Aruba Ostrich Farm invites you to meet these unique birds and learn more about their behavior, natural instinct and maybe even stand on its enormous eggs. Our Savanna Lodge Restaurant serves ostrich delicacies, chicken dishes, salads, vegetarian dishes and offers a breathtaking view along Aruba's north shore. Don't forget to pay a visit to our African Art







Bring this ad for a 20% discount on the tour. Not valid with other promotions.

Aruba TODAY

Monday, December 15, 2008 ADVERTORIAL Aruba's homemade ci,



ORANJESTAD - Benjamin Petrochi has started the newest export product of Aruba, locally produced cigars called 'Aruhiba'. These cigars are produced and cultivated in Aruba. Petrochi has always had an interest in the cigar business and has also sold cigars from outside, and now he is growing his own tobacco crop. After many attempts and trips to Santo Domingo and Cuba he started his own production and cultivation of



"Aruhiba" cigars in Aruba. The process took 5 years Petrochi's dedication to the cigars is important for the molding and process of making a perfect cigar which takes a long time. The cigar case is specially designed for the cigars with the logo 'Aruhiba' and 'Made in Aruba'. Petrochi considers 'Aruhiba' a promotion for Aruba through fine quality cigars. The company sells international cigars as well.



Corona with five cigars and get 1 free for \$35.00. Located at the Historic Dutch Windmill from 8am to 8pm. Closed on Sunday.

The only place to get Aruhiba and all major credit cards accepted.

We have homemade and best premium Cuban Cigars. All cigars are legal through costum.

Call 586-7833 or 593-6177. Open for tour operators and we have a large parking space. Come and see Mr. Petrochi rolling the cigars everyday.







Visit Aruba's world famous ALOE FACTORY & MUSEUM

THIS MONTH : REDUCED ENTRANCE FEE & FREE GIFT













Hato, it's hard to imagine that the same fields were already in use 160 years ago.

Where nowadays a modern factory shines and produces a large collection of cosmetic products that are being exported all over the world, in 1890 farmers carefully planted the first Aloe Vera plants. Until today Aruba Aloe Balm NV has continued to cultivate the wonder plant and the dedicated field workers are working hard every day to keep the plants in excellent condition.

It's not a surprise that the Aloe from Aruba is called 'the World's Finest Aloe™'. Each Aruba Aloe cosmetic product contains 100% pure Aruba Aloe Vera gel, which is freshly harvested and processed to give all products a unique moisturizing effect.

This month, Aruba Aloe Balm NV introduces a special Reduced Fee of USD \$3,- for the Aruba Aloe Museum and Factory tour, which gives

When you pass by the Aruba Aloe fields and its modern factory at you an inside look into the production process of the Aruba Aloe products and you will learn all about the 160-year old history of Aloe on Aruba. All visitors who pay the entrance fee, will receive a coupon* of USD \$3.- which they can use towards a purchase of any of the Aruba Aloe products in the Aruba Aloe store at the factory. A good reason to visit the Aruba Aloe Museum and Factory this week and bring home one of the few products that are truly made on Aruba.

ARUBA ALOE TOUR INFORMATION

Monday to Friday: 8:30 AM - 4:00 PM Saturdays: 9:00 AM – 12:00 noon

Tours start every 20 minutes, no reservation needed

We are located at a short drive from the Hotel area at Pitastraat 115, Hato For more information call 588-3222

> The coupon has no cash value and can only be used for the purchase of Aruba Aloe products on the day of the tour and only at the store located at the factory in Hato.



SITE Sets a Course to Paradise!

Aruba to Host Society of Incentive and Travel Executives' 2009 International Conference



ORANJESTAD - Aruba is thrilled to announce that the Society of Incentive Travel Executives (SITE) has selected the island paradise as the host country for the 2009 International Conference, set for December 3-6. The event will bring together the top minds in incentive travel, a multi-billion dollar global industry, to one of the Caribbean's most celebrated destinations. Aruba promises to be the "host with the most" as it welcomes hundreds of delegates from around the world for three days of educational sessions, vendor showcases, roundtables, networking events, gala dinners and much more. The 2009 International Conference will be held at the two official host hotels, The Westin Aruba Resort and the Radisson Aruba Resort, Casino & Spa.

Securing this significant conference comes at a perfect time for the destination as Aruba is enjoying increased interest from around the globe. Not only has the island recently undergone over \$350 million in upgrades, expansions and renovations across all aspects of the tourism sector, but arrivals from the U.S. in 2007 were also up 3.27% over the previous year. While worldwide arrivals also saw a remarkable increase with an extraordinary 8.56% spike over 2006, with 753,816 visitors from around the world making Aruba their destination of choice in 2007.

"SITE's membership is rich with innovators who greatly influence not only the evolution of the incentive industry, but also the business outcomes of client organizations," said SITE President Padraic Gilligan. "The SITE International Conference is a superlative forum where professionals from around the world gather to share insights that help them achieve professional goals, surpass client expectations, and have a meaningful and positive impact on economies of destination cities around the world."

"We were thrilled to hear of SITE's decision to make Aruba its host location for the 2009 Conference," International said Minister of Tourism and

Transportation, Edison Briesen. "The incentive travel industry is an important one for our island and we are looking forward to showcasing the many things that sets Aruba apart from the rest of the Caribbean region throughout the conference. We are confident that SITE's commitment to bringing together the most influential minds in this field, coupled with Aruba's dedication to delivering an unmatched travel experience to all our guests, is a recipe for success."

These principals of community, leadership and growth guide SITE's vision — as well as its commitment to selecting distinct locales for its own events. Aruba, situated in the southern Caribbean, is a tropical paradise that enjoys year-round near perfect weather, less than 20 inches of rainfall annually, extraordinary hotels and resorts, over 200 incredible international restaurants, and an extremely rich heritage. Arubans, renowned for their warmth and hospitality

and known as the friendliest in the Caribbean region, proudly showcase the island's cultural and environmental diversity, and are equally devoted to respecting and preserving the island's pristine marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

"Because Aruba is, without question, one of the top incentive travel destinations in the Caribbean, it is fitting that SITE, the foremost professional association devoted to the incentive travel market, would

choose our island as the host for its 2009 International Conference,' said Myrna Jansen-Feliciano, managing director for the Aruba Tourism Authority. "The decision makers in the incentive travel industry will experience a successful event as a result of our strong public/private partnership that makes planning a meeting so much easier and Aruba's wellknown hospitality."

"Aruba is ideal for SITE's constituency," said SITE CEO Brenda Anderson.

Christmas Cash GIVEAWAY

AT CRYSTAL & SEAPORT CASINOS



Play with "The Card" on our Slot Machines and receive one (1) coupon for every ten (10) points redeemed. For table games, client will receive one (1) coupon for every combination depending on the game as follows:

- Mini Baccarat; Any tie
- Black Jack; Any three 7 or Black Jack
- Roulette; Straight on date & doubles
- Caribbean Stud Poker; Any bonus on the progressive
- Three Card Poker; Bonus on the ante
- Texas Holdem; Any bonus (Seaport Casino)

Deposit your coupon in one of the raffle drums located at Crystal & Seaport Casinos.

Campaign starts on November 17th, 2008

Drawing takes place: December 22nd, 2008 at 8:00 pm in Seaport Casino.

December 23rd, 2008 at 8:00 pm in Crystal Casino.

Winners have to be present with a valid ID to claim their prizes.

Coupons received at each casino are valid only at the respective casino.

Points are not redeemable!



CHRISTMAS TREE WITH GIFTS

AT CRYSTAL & SEAPORT CASINOS



Starting December 1st until December 21st, 2008!

Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday night 4 winners will be chosen between 8pm & 10pm, who will get the chance to go to our christmas tree and pick out a christmas ball which will contain a prize. Cash Prizes

• Dinner for 2

- Electronics
- Spa Treatments
- Household Gifts
- & many other prizes...

For more information call 583-6000 ext. 6318 or ext. 6437.

Winners have to be present with a valid ID to claim their prizes. Coupons received at each casino are valid only at the respective casino. Points are not redeemable!

Setar gets together for the holidays









DIVI LINKS - Members national of management of Aruba's

giant Setar, got together in

communication honor of the holidays for an elegant, gourmet cocktail

party at Windows on Aruba, The guests enjoyed Divi's overlooking Divi Links.

extravagant







CAKE OUT

by Chris

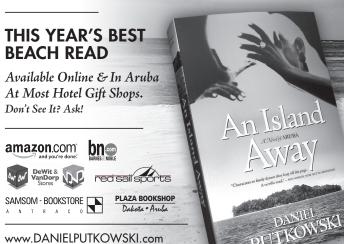
An assortment of 10 homemade, individually wrapped desserts, attractively packaged in a tasteful holiday basket. Great for a holiday dinner parties, office gifts, special clients, colleagues, host gifts or anyone who loves homemade desserts!

A unique and delicious way to say... Bon Pasco

Afl. 85.00 & 110.00 (*includes dessert wine) Email: cakeoutbychris@gmail.com Tel: 563-8042

DISCOVER THE BESTSELLING NOVEL ABOUT ARUBA

*** (Amazon.com) "An Island Away is a no-holds-barred look at Aruba. A must read." — ARTHUR D. JENSEN, LAGO-COLONY.COM

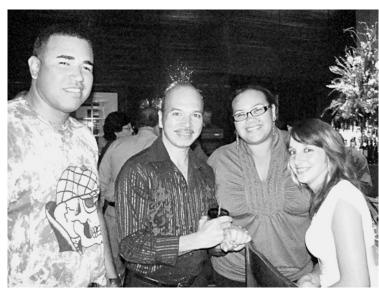


d'oeuvres combined with gracious service in a distinctive ambiance. Pictured here Setar's usually busy communication specialists enjoying a well-deserved break.





Johnson Mecor returns to Amazonia Churrascaria for the second year



PALM BEACH - Johnson Mecor returned to Amazonia Churrascaria for the second year in a row with over 30 employees. Last year's dinner experience was amazing and they were happy and eager to repeat it this year. Members of management thanked employees for applying themselves so well this year and wished them all a happy season and a prosperous new year. Pictured here dinner at Amazonia Churrascaria.



Sunshine Real Estate

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Aruba TODAY

Island Guests in focus

Bill & Deb sad to leave

EAGLE BEACH – Yesterday Bill & Deb Coll boarded the morning flight to New Hampshire where they reside. They have been to Aruba many times before, this year's trip being number thirteen in a row. "We're very sad to leave, we called back home this morning and I was told there is an ice storm and that e have no electricity. We really wish we could stay!!", Bill & Deb said. We hope that they survive the cold, and the lesson Ito be learned here is that unless you like skiing, you need to spend your winters on beautiful Aruba.

- Photos by JJ -





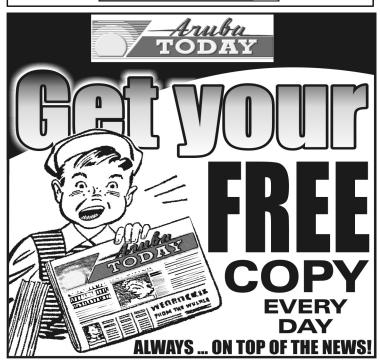
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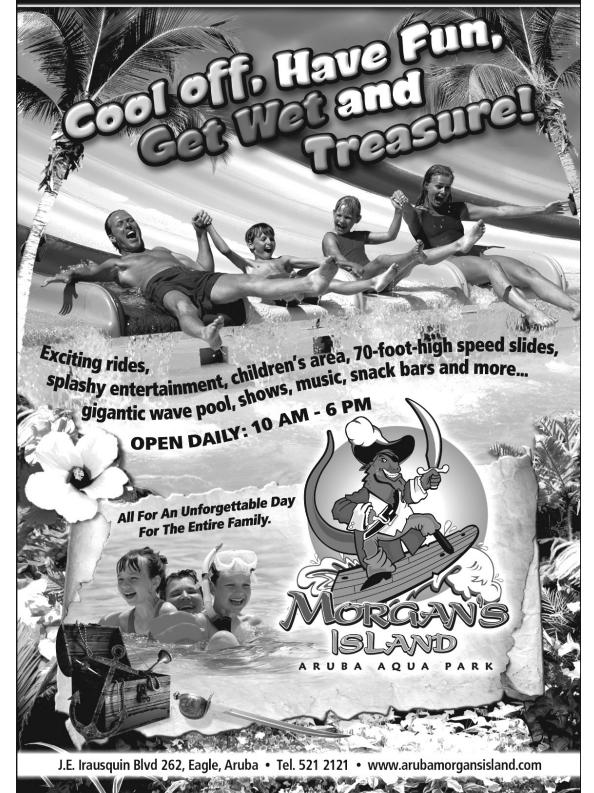
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ORANJESTAD - Cuba's Cookin' restaurant was picked as the venue for Salamander Holding's annual Christmas bash. The party took off fueled on mojitos and the terrific live



music of Yessy, the diva, Cuba's Cookin' in-house entertainer. Yessy and maestro Ramon had the guests dancing even before appetizers were served. The food at Cuba's Cookin' was



equally spectacular starting with empanadas and ayakas and following with special holiday platters or the fresh catch of the day with chef's secret sauce. Owner Jodi Tobman Hagedoorn thanked her dedicated staff members for their outstanding performance this year and expressed her gratitude for their global thinking and local actions with the company's Tikkun Olam



program aiming at the repair of the world one donation at the time. Pictured here party snaps shots of the good times had by all. Salamander Holdings, with its four successful brands of souvenir shops and gift boutiques T.H. Palm & Company, the Juggling Fish, The Lazy Lizard and Coconut Trading Company is opening two additional stores on Palm Beach, at the South Beach Centre and at the Village across from the Radisson Aruba Resort Casino & Spa



Monday, December 15, 2008 ADVERTISEMENT

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Dinner includes appetizers, salads, main courses and dessert selections. Champagne, red and white wine and beer is served along with an open bar which offers a variety of tropical cocktails, including some Aruban specialties – be sure to ask for a Captain's Special!

Wednesday's nights Dinner Sail features a traditional Caribbean themed buffet catered by the chefs from the Marriott Resort. Thursday's night Dinner Sail features a

buffet with a Mediterranean twist. Whichever night you choose, you're sure to enjoy a unique dinner experience.

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beef, pork, lamb, sausage, and poultry. The meats are prepared in the healthiest style of cooking—slow roasting—where much of the fat drips off in the roasting process, so those looking for a lower fat option to sautéing, pan frying, or deep frying will also be able to indulge.

The Brazilian-style steakhouse also offers up a garden full of healthy eats on a lavish 40-item seasonal salad bar, giving dieters plenty to choose from to accompany the slow-roasted meats. A selection of fresh lettuces and vegetables may be standard for most salad bars, but Texas de Brazil's version goes a gourmet twist further, treating the palate to additional items like marinated portabella mushrooms, sweet roasted

bell peppers, hearts of palm, sundried tomatoes, imported cheeses—including fresh buffalomozzarella—sushi, homemade soups, and much more.

The salad bar is included in the continuous service meal with unlimited choices from the grilled meats, but for vegetarians or the non-meat eaters, a special price is offered for just the salad bar.

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Monday, December 15, 2008

Bush: Iraq war is not over, more work ahead

By JENNIFER LOVEN

AP White House Correspondent

BAGHDAD (AP) On an Iraq trip shrouded in secrecy and marred by dissent, President George W. Bush on Sunday hailed progress in the war that defines his presidency and got a size-10 reminder of his unpopularity when a man hurled two shoes at him during a news conference.

"This is a farewell kiss, you dog!" shouted the protester in Arabic, later identified as Muntadar al-Zeidi, a correspondent for Al-Baghdadiya television, an Iraqi-owned station based in

Bush ducked both shoes as they whizzed past his head and landed with a thud against the wall behind him.

"It was a size 10," Bush joked later.

The U.S. president visited the Iraqi capital just 37 days before he hands the war off to his successor, Barack Obama, who has pledged to end it. The president wanted to highlight a drop in violence in a nation still riven by ethnic strife and to celebrate a recent U.S.-Iraq security agreement, which calls for U.S. troops to withdraw from Iraq by the end of 2011.

"The war is not over," Bush said, adding that "it is decisively on it's way to being won."

In many ways, the unannounced trip was a victory lap without a clear victory. Nearly 150,000 U.S. troops remain in Iraq fighting a war that is intensely disliked across the globe.

Continued on Page B6



President George W. Bush walks with Iraqi President Jalal Talabani after arriving in Baghdad, on Sunday, Dec. 14, 2008.

U.S. Senator serves duty in Afghanistan



Graham speaks during an interview with the Associated Press at a U.S. base in Kabul, Afghanistan, on Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2008. Graham, a Republican from South Carolina and the only U.S. senator in the military's Guard or Reserves, donned the Air Force's camouflaged uniform for five days last week to serve in Kabul.

Associated Press **By JASON STRAZIUSO Associated Press Writer** KABUL, Afghanistan - The men around Lindsey Graham ignored his powerful political title — U.S. senator — and instead addressed him by rank - colonel.

Graham, a Republican from South Carolina and the only U.S. senator in the military's Guard or Reserves, donned the Air Force's camouflaged uniform for five days last week to serve in Kabul.

The senator enrolled in the ROTC in 1973 and has been in the Air Force Guard or Reserves as a military lawyer ever since. In Kabul, he worked with the staff of military lawyers at the U.S. base Camp Eggers. The office is helping to train military judges and defense lawyers, and to write Afghanistan's uniform code of military justice.

Graham said his experiences in the military taught him how difficult wartime deployments can be on families.

Continued on Page 11

Fed mulls interest rate cut

Maybe to all-time low

WASHINGTON (AP) - With the U.S. spiraling deeper into recession, the Federal Reserve is ready to slash its key interest rate - perhaps to an all-time low- in hopes of cushioning some of the economic fallout felt by many struggling Americans.

To battle the worst financial crisis since the 1930s, Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke and his colleagues already have ratcheted down their main lever for influencing the economy _ the federal funds rate - to 1 percent, a level seen only once before in the last half-century.

The Fed opens a two-day meeting Monday to assess the economy and decide its next move on rates. Another reduction to the funds rate, the interest banks charge each other on overnight loans, is all but certain to be announced Tuesday. Many economists predict the Fed will cut its rate in half - to just 0.50 percent. A



The Federal Reserve Building in Washington while the Fed is inside meeting, October 29, 2008. The Fed is expected to lower the prime rate today after two-days of meetings.

Reuters Photo percentage

few think the Fed could opt for three-quarters an even more forceful action lowering rates by a whopping

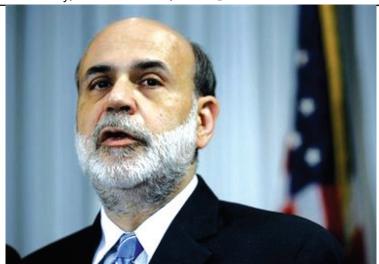
point or more.

Continued on Page B2



Monday, December 15, 2008 UP FRONT





Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke speaks in this Thursday, Dec. 4, 2008 file photo, at the Federal Reserve in Washington. Credit card companies could no longer boost interest rates on existing account balances if the Federal Reserve adopts new rules as written at a meeting set for Thursday Dec. 18, 2008. 'The proposed rules are intended to establish a new baseline for fairness in how credit card plans operate,' Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke said in May.

Associated Press

RATE CUT Continued from Page B1

If that larger cut occurs, it would be the lowest on records that track the monthly average of the targeted funds rate going back to 1954.

Even an aggressive rate reduction won't turn the economy around, analysts said.

"It is not so much going to give the economy a big push forward. It's more a case of trying to help the economy from being pushed further backward by all these negative events," said Stuart Hoffman, chief economist at PNC Financial Services Group.

However deeply the Fed decides to cut rates, the prime rate - now at 4 percent - for many consumer and small-business loans would drop by a corresponding amount. The prime lending rate is used to peg rates on home equity loans, certain credit cards and other consumer loans. Cheaper rates could give pinched borrowers a dose of relief.

The goal of lower borrowing costs is to entice people and businesses to spend more, which would revive the flat-lined economy. So far, though, the Fed's aggressive rate reductions have failed to lift the country out of a recession that started last December.

Clobbered by the financial crisis, worried banks have hoarded their cash and been extremely reluctant to lend money to customers. Fearful consumers, watching jobs vanish and their investments tank, have sharply cut back their spending, including bigticket purchases like homes and cars that typically involve financing.

The negative forces have fed off each other, creating a vicious cycle that Bernanke and Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson have been desperately trying to break.

To unlock lending and get financial markets to operate more normally, the U.S. has resorted to a string of radical actions, including a \$700 billion financial bailout where the government is making cash injections in banks in return for partial ownership stakes. In terms of rate cuts, the Fed is getting ever closer to running out of ammunition.

It can lower the funds rate only so far - to zero. Even if that were to happen - a point of debate among economists - the prime rate would fall to 3 percent but no lower.

Against that backdrop, Bernanke says the central bank is exploring other ways to stimulate the economy.

The Fed could buy longerterm Treasury or agency securities on the open market in substantial quantities, Bernanke says. This might lower rates on these securities and help spur buying appetites.

Another option the Fed has mulled: issuing its own debt, which would give the central bank cash and more flexibility to battle the financial crisis. To do that, however, the Fed would need new powers from Congress.

"The Fed wants to show that it has tools and options and is not out of tricks because interest rates are very low," said Michael Feroli, economist at JPMorgan Economics. "The problems holding back the economy are fairly long lived in nature."

To combat the financial crisis, the Fed already has created first-of-its-kind programs, such as getting cash directly to companies by buying up mounds of "commercial paper," the short-term debt firms use to pay everyday expenses such as payroll and supplies.

It also recently launched massive programs to boost the availability of consumer credit, including that for cars, student loans, homes and credit cards. The Fed also is making loans to banks, is providing a financial backstop to the mutual fund industry, and has injected billions of dollars in financial markets here and abroad.

The Fed could opt to expand programs by enlarging loans it's now making, providing loans to other types of companies, or buying more and different types of debt. The Fed's balance sheet has ballooned to \$2.2 trillion, from close to \$900 billion in September, reflecting some of those other activities to get credit flowing again.

Even with all the bold moves, the economy continues to sink deeper into despair.

Skittish employers axed 533,000 jobs in November alone. That drove the unemployment rate up to 6.7 percent, a 15-year high.

Since the start of the recession, the economy has shed nearly 2 million jobs. Analysts predict another 3 million more will be lost between now and the spring of 2010.

Last week alone, Bank of America Corp., tool maker Stanley Works and Sara Lee Corp., known for food brands such as Jimmy Dean and Hillshire Farm, announced job cuts.

General Motors Corp., Chrysler LLC and Ford Motor Co., meanwhile, are fighting for their survival. GM and Chrysler have said they're in danger of running out of money within weeks. The White House is exploring new ways to help Detroit after rescue efforts collapsed in Congress.

With the employment market eroding and consumers retrenching, the economy could stagger backward at a shocking 6 percent rate in the current October-December quarter, analysts predict. It shrank at a 0.5 percent pace in the third quarter.





ef: Gov. Palin's home church damaged by arson

Members of Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin's church gathered in high spirits at a middle school Sunday, two days after their building was badly damaged by a fire authorities are investigating as arson.

Palin, the former Republican vice presidential candidate, did not attend services Sunday because she was in Juneau preparing to propose a state budget, said her spokesman, Bill McAllister.

The congregation realizes the church is more than the building, said John Doak, associate pastor at Wasilla Bible Church.

"The definition of the church is the body of Christ, made up of God's people," Doak said after the hourlong service at Wasilla Middle School attended by about 1,200 people. "The church is still there. We are the church."

Damage to the 2 1/2-year-old church building is estimated at \$1 million. The blaze was set at the main entrance Friday night while a small group, including two children, were inside. No one was injured.

Fire Chief James Steele said the blaze is being investigated as an

arson. Patsy Inks said the news initially shocked and frustrated her. But by Sunday, she was feeling blessed, she said at the school, where worshippers lingered over a potluck dinner for a church family leaving Alaska.

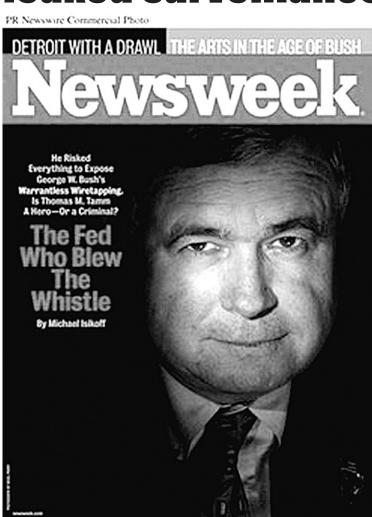
"This tragedy has brought us all together," Inks said, her eyes tearing up. Palin, who was not at the church at the time of the fire, stopped by Saturday. According to McAllister, Palin told an assistant pastor she was sorry if the fire was connected to the "undeserved negative attention" the church has



James Steele, fire chief for the Central Mat-Su Fire Department stands outside of the fire damaged Wasilla Bible Church in Wasilla, Alaska Saturday Dec. 13, 2008. Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin's home church was badly damaged in an arson fire. No one was injured in the fire, which was intentionally set while people, including two children, were inside.

Associated Press

Report: Justice lawyer leaked surveillance program



In the December 22 issue of Newsweek (on newsstands December 15), 'The Fed Who Blew The Whistle,' Newsweek's Michael Isikoff writes about Thomas M. Tamm, former Justice Department lawyer who leaked information about the Bush administration's warrantless-wiretapping program.

PRNewsFoto

WASHINGTON (AP) - A by federal agents last year, told former Justice Department lawyer says he tipped off the news media about the Bush administration's warrantless eavesdropping program because it "didn't smell right," Newsweek magazine reported Sunday.

Thomas Tamm, whose suburban Washington home was searched

the magazine he leaked the existence of the secret program to The New York Times 18 months before the newspaper broke the story.

"I thought this was something the other branches of the government and the public ought to know about. So they could decide: do they want

this massive spying program to be taking place?" Tamm told Newsweek in what the magazine said were a series of recent interviews that he granted against the advice of his lawyers.

"If somebody were to say, who am I to do that? I would say, 'I had taken an oath to uphold the Constitution.' It's stunning that somebody higher up the chain of command didn't speak up," the magazine quoted Tamm as

Tamm, 56, told the magazine he called the Times from a subway station pay phone in Washington.

In December 2005 the Times published a story exposing the Bush administration's warrantless wiretapping program to eavesdrop on international phone calls and emails of U.S. residents without court warrants.

The story cited multiple anonymous sources. Newsweek said the Times reporters who wrote the story refused to say whether Tamm was one of them

The eavesdropping had been conducted without public knowledge and without any court approval. It has since been put under the authority of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court.

Tamm, who left the Justice Department in 2006, had worked in the department's Office of Intelligence Policy and Review, a secretive unit that oversees surveillance of terrorist and espionage targets, according to Newsweek.

vice presidential candidate Aug. 29. Worshippers acknowledged the possible Palin connection with the fire, but more in a "gee, maybe" sort of way, said Rob Tracy, who shuttled people to the school for services. But people are speculating about other motives.

"It's just as likely to be some troubled person who has a beef with God," Tracy said.

"Or some local punks," Doak

After Palin was named John

received since she became the McCain's running mate, the evangelical church was the subject of intense scrutiny. Early in her campaign, Palin's church was criticized for promoting in a Sunday bulletin a Focus on the Family "Love Won Out Conference" in Anchorage.

> The conference promised to "help men and women dissatisfied living homosexually understand that same-sex attractions can be overcome." Wasilla, the governor's hometown, is 40 miles north of Anchorage.



Monday, December 15, 2008 U.S. NEWS

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Illinois legislators focus on ousting governor



Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich and his wife Patti leave a downtown office building Sunday, Dec. 14, 2008, in Chicago. Blagojevich was arrested this week on federal charges that he tried to sell President-elect Barack Obama's vacant Senate seat.

Associated Press

By CHRISTOPHER WILLS Associated Press Writer SPRINGFIELD, Illinois (AP) - Officially, Illinois lawmakers

will gather soon to consider a special election to replace Barack Obama in the U.S. Senate - but it was already clear Sunday that ousting disgraced Gov. Rod Blagojevich was at the top of many to-do lists.

"On a scale of one to 10, impeachment is 25 and everything else is a two," said Rep. Jack Franks, a fellow Democrat.

A legislative session beginning Monday will be the first since Blagojevich was arrested last week on charges that he tried to profit from his power to choose Obama's replacement and shook down businesses seeking state deals.

Republicans said Sunday they plan to put intense public pressure on Democrats to move against Blagojevich. A spokesman for Democratic House Speaker Michael Madigan said he will discuss the idea with Republican leaders on Monday.

Meanwhile, Blagojevich was expected to firm up his legal representation after meeting

over the weekend with Chicago attorney Ed Genson, who has defended media mogul Conrad Black and R&B singer R. Kelly.

Blagojevich and his wife, Patti, left Genson's office building Sunday evening, declining to comment beyond wishing gathered reporters and officers a "merry Christmas."

Genson, a bulldog who generally takes his cases to trial, left shortly afterward. He wouldn't talk about the meeting but told reporters, "I have to check some conflicts, but I'm sure I'll be retained."

Genson has previously said he and Blagojevich would make a "mutual decision" Monday.

Blagojevich spokesman Lucio Guerrero said the governor had no plans to resign Monday. Guerrero didn't respond directly to whether the governor could or would do anything to slow the Legislature's move toward impeachment.

"The governor has indicated in the past there is more to this story that he's wanting to tell at an appropriate time," he said. David Dring, spokesman for House Minority Leader Tom Cross, said Republicans will step up the pressure on Democrats

Aruba TODAY

"If they won't work with us, you'll probably see some good theater," Dring said.

to remove Blagojevich.

The Republicans also plan to run television ads pressuring Democrats to approve a special election to replace Obama. Blagojevich still holds the power to appoint a new senator, and if he resigned, that power would go to Democratic Lt. Gov. Patrick Quinn.

Illinois Republican Party chairman Andy McKenna told reporters the ads will "make the point that this is the people's seat, and the people deserve a special election."

A spokesman said Madigan, who has often clashed with Blagojevich, will discuss impeachment with Cross on Monday.

Franks said Madigan _ a methodical man who never rushes decisions - listens to House members and will probably respond to public cries for impeachment. But Franks also said members will not be satisfied with a wait-and-see response.

Eighty percent of lawmakers responding to a GateHouse News Service survey said the Legislature should pursue impeachment quickly.

"Anything short of convening the (impeachment) committee would not be enough," Franks said

Madigan's daughter, Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan, has asked the state Supreme Court to remove Blagojevich from office, claiming he is unfit to serve. Madigan said Sunday that she expects word on whether the court will hear her request "probably just in a few days."

Lisa Madigan is considered one of the top Democratic candidates for governor in 2010. The state constitution gives lawmakers broad authority to impeach a governor for any reason they consider sufficient. The House would decide whether to file charges against the governor, and the Senate would ultimately rule on them.

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lore power loss possible in ice-ravaged Northeast

JAFFREY, New Hampshire (AP) - Joined by people seeking shelter from the bitter cold, parishioners at the Jaffrey Bible Church on Sunday thanked God for a warm place to sleep and for the utility crews struggling to repair power lines snapped by the devastating ice storm that hit the northeastern New England states.

"Your fellow Jaffrey residents have stepped up and made this a more bearable situation," Walt Pryor, recreation department director for the town of 5,700, told the congregation of about 150 people Sunday morning.

The church in the town, 15 miles from the Massachusetts state line, had been turned into a shelter, with cots and mattresses set up in offices and hallways, and televisions and 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzles for children in the basement. Donated food was plentiful, including lobster casserole, pot roast, and barbecued chicken.

The ice storm knocked out electrical service for 1.4 million homes and businesses late last week. Roughly 649,000 customers were still without powerSundaymorninginupstate New York, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine. Utilities in hardest-hit New Hampshire said power might not be totally restored to the region until Thursday or Friday.

Officials warned there could be more outages as drooping branches shed ice and snap back to their original positions, potentially taking out more power lines.

President George W. Bush declared a state of emergency for New Hampshire and nine of Massachusetts' 14 counties, directing the Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide relief assistance.

Adding to the misery of downed power lines and property damage, temperatures dropped into the teens and 20s Fahrenheit early Sunday, with single-digit readings in parts of New Hampshire and Maine. Fryeburg, Maine, hit a low of just 2 degrees above zero F. Warmer weather was on the way for Monday.

The number of people at shelters in Massachusetts nearly doubled to 1,800 Saturday night as people faced another night without lights and heat.

Nearly 1,300 people stayed at 56 shelters in New Hampshire. Crews across the region reported the ice had destroyed utility poles, wires and other equipment, but said the extent of damage was unclear because some roads still were impassable.

About 300 National Guardsmen were deployed in New Hampshire, mostly in Stoddard, 27 miles (43 kilometers) north of Jaffrey, to help with debris

Despite the difficulties, utilities were making progress with help from utility crews from Canada and as far away as Virginia and Michigan.

In New Hampshire, about 233,000 homes and businesses were still blacked out Sunday, down from a peak of 430,000 on Friday, utilities reported.

In Massachusetts, about 162,000 homes and businesses remained dark Sunday, down from 350,000



Lamont Priest, left, and Raheem Jefferson of Lewis Tree Service from Bethlehem, Ct., cut back iced limbs to get to power lines in Temple, N.H., Sunday, Dec. 14, 2008. Three days after an ice storm hit the Northeast hundreds of thousands of people are still without power.

Associated Press

Maine, about 85,000 customers had no electricity, down from more than 220,000. In Vermont, about 10,500 customers were waiting for service, down from about 40,000.

Emergency management officials reported four stormrelated deaths. One man in New

at the height of the storm. In Hampshire and a couple in New York state died of carbon monoxide poisoning from home generators. The body of a Massachusetts public works supervisor who went missing while checking on storm damage was recovered from a reservoir.

Bank bomber might have used cell phones

PORTLAND, Oregon (AP) -Cell phones might have been used in a bomb blast that killed two officers who had carried the device into an Oregon bank, investigators said Sunday as they released surveillance photos of a "person of interest."

Marion County Sheriff Russ Isham said the man in the photos, who has not been identified, may have experience in welding and electronics.

The photos, apparently taken with a security camera, show a man with an average build who appears to be in his 30s. He has a beard and dark hair.

The Sheriff's Office declined to say where the photos were taken but said someone involved in the bombing might have been in the central Oregon city of Bend last month.

Cell phones and items that might have been used to make the bomb were bought in Bend last month, Isham said. The man might have taken actions "in furtherance of his plan" on Thursday and Friday in Salem and Woodburn.

Authorities would not elaborate on how cell phones might have been used. Bombers often use cell phone signals to remotely detonate explosives.

Lt. Sheila Lorance of the Marion County Sheriff's Office, the lead agency in the case, did not have an explanation Sunday for why the officers who ended up dead or wounded took the bomb into the bank after it was found outside.

A West Coast Bank branch manager found the device Friday after a call about a bomb threat to a nearby Wells Fargo bank branch that turned up a harmless device.

Isham asked the public to help identify the man in the photos. A \$35,000 reward has been offered for tips.

"We remind the public of the danger he poses to our community, not only to the potential intended victims, but to others who may know him or are exposed to his explosives," Isham said.

"He may be careful, but others around him _ children, relatives or co-workers _ may be in grave danger," Isham said.

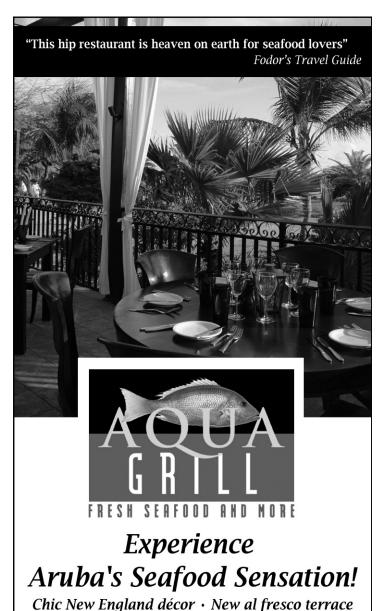
Woodburn Police Chief Scott Russell remained in critical condition Sunday at a Portland hospital as a result of the blast



This undated image released by the Marion County Sheriff's Office on Sunday Dec. 14, 2008 shows a 'person of interest' in the bomb blast Friday that killed two police officers at a Woodburn, Oregon bank and left a third in critical condition. The sheriff's office would not say where the photo was taken, or say whether the man's identity is known.

Associated Press

that killed Woodburn police Capt. Tom Tennant and Oregon State Police Senior Trooper William Hakim. Robert Sznewajs, the CEO of West Coast Bank, said Sunday that the bank planned to establish a fund for the families of the law enforcement officers.



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Monday, December 15, 2008 WORLD NEWS



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In this image from APTN video, a man throws a shoe at President George W. Bush during a news conference with Iraq Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki on Sunday, Dec. 14, 2008, in Baghdad. The man threw two shoes at Bush, one after another. Bush ducked both throws, and neither man was hit.

Associated Press

BUSH-IRAQ Continued from Page B1

More than 4,209 members of the U.S. military have died in the conflict, which has cost U.S. taxpayers \$576 billion since it began five years and nine months ago.

Polls show most Americans believe the U.S. erred in invading Iraq in 2003. Bush ordered the nation into war against Saddam Hussein's Iraq while citing intelligence claiming the Mideast nation harbored weapons of mass destruction.

The weapons were never found, the intelligence was discredited, Bush's credibility with U.S. voters plummeted and Saddam was captured and executed.

"There is still more work to be done," Bush said after his meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

It was at that point the journalist stood up and threw a shoe from about 20 feet away. Bush ducked, and it narrowly missed his head. The second shoe came quickly, and Bush ducked again while several Iraqis grabbed the man and dragged him to the floor.

In Iraqi culture, throwing shoes at someone is a sign of contempt. Iraqis whacked a statue of Saddam with their shoes after U.S. marines toppled it to the ground following the 2003 invasion.

White House press secretary Dana Perino suffered an eye injury in the news conference melee. Bush brushed off the incident, comparing it to political protests at home.

"So what if I guy threw his

shoe at me?" he said.

Al-Maliki, who spoke before the incident, praised postwar progress: "Today, Iraq is moving forward in every field."

After the news conference, the president took a 15-minute helicopter ride through dark skies over Baghdad to Camp Victory. Telling hundreds of troops he was "heading into retirement," Bush blamed Saddam for the 2003 invasion and said, "America is safer and more secure" than it was before the war.

For Bush, the war is the issue around which both he and the country defined his two terms in office. He saw the invasion and continuing fight as a necessary action to protect Americans and fight terrorism. Though his decision won support at first, the public now has largely decided that the U.S. needs to get out of Iraq.

Air Force One, the president's distinctive powder blue-and-white jetliner, landed at Baghdad International Airport in the afternoon local time after a secretive Saturday night departure from Washington. In a sign of security gains in this war zone, Bush received a formal arrival ceremony _ a flourish absent in his three earlier trips.

Bush soon began a rapid-fire series of meetings with top Iraqi leaders.

He met first with Iraqi President Jalal Talabani and the country's two vice presidents, Tariq al-Hashemi and Adel Abdul-Mahdi, at the ornate, marble-floored Salam Palace along the shores of the Tigris River.

Aruba TODAY

Later, Bush's motorcade pulled out the heavily fortified Green Zone and crossed over the Tigris so he could meet al-Maliki at the prime minister's palace. A huge orange moon hung low over the horizon as Bush's was ferried quickly through the city.

The two leaders signed ceremonial copy of the security agreement.

The Bush administration and even White House critics credit last year's military buildup with the security gains in Iraq. Last month, attacks fell to the lowest monthly level since the war began in 2003.

Still, it's unclear what will happen when the U.S. troops leave. While violence has slowed in Iraq, attacks continue, especially in the north. At least 55 people were killed Thursday in a suicide bombing in a restaurant near Kirkuk.

It was Bush's last trip to the war zone before Obama takes office Jan. 20. Obama won an election largely viewed as a referendum on Bush, who has endured low approval ratings because of the war and more recently, the U.S. recession. Obama, a Democrat, has

promised he will bring all U.S. combat troops back home from Iraq a little over a year into his term, as long as commanders agree a withdrawal would not endanger American personnel or Iraq's security. Obama has said the drawdown in Iraq would allow him to shift troops and bolster the U.S. presence in Afghanistan.

The new U.S.-Iraqi security pact, calls for all American troops to be withdrawn by the end of 2011, in two stages. The first stage begins next year, when U.S. troops pull back from Baghdad and other Iraqi cities by the end of June. Gen. Raymond Odierno, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, said Saturday that even after that summer deadline, some U.S. troops will remain in Iraqi cities.

Journalists and staff who made the 10½-hour trip to Iraq with the president agreed to tell almost no one about the plans, and the White House released false schedules detailing activities planned for Bush in Washington on Sunday.



Police thwart Moscow rally, seize 90-130 people

By PAUL SONNE

Associated Press Writer

MOSCOW (AP) - Police thwarted a banned anti-Kremlin protest in central Moscow on Sunday, seizing dozens of demonstrators and shoving them into trucks.

Organizers said 130 people were detained around the capital but police put the number at 90. The opposition movement headed by fierce Kremlin critic and former chess champion Garry Kasparov said the co-leader of the group was one of those seized.

The Other Russia movement organized the protest, in defiance of a ban, to draw attention to Russia's economic troubles and to protest Kremlin plans to extend the presidential term from four years to six. Critics say the constitutional change as part of a retreat from democracy and is aimed at strengthening the grip of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and his allies. News broadcasts on the main television networks made no mention of the Moscow crackdown or of protests in St. Petersburg and Vladivostok.

Kasparov and other prominent liberals have just launched a new anti-Kremlin movement called Solidarity in a bid to unite Russia's liberal forces and encourage a popular revolution similar to those in Ukraine and Georgia.

Kasparov had vowed to carry out Sunday's protest although authorities had denied permission for it.

Before the scheduled start, hundreds of officers guarded Triumph Square, which was ringed by police trucks and metal barriers.

Police roughly grabbed protesters who tried to enter the square, dragging at least 25 people into waiting trucks. Police also seized Other Russia co-leader Eduard Limonov along with a handful of bodyguards as they walked toward the square. They were bundled into police vehicles. Kasparov and a group of supporters decided to avoid police by marching in a different location, then set off for a third site after finding another strong police spokeswoman presence, Marina Litvinovich said.

Dozens of protesters gathered at the third site and marched

about a kilometer (half a mile) along a major street, shouting slogans such as "Russia without Putin!" before they dispersed. Kasparov traveled by car and the march was over when he arrived, Litvinovich said. Kasparov's Web site said police in Moscow also broke up a protest by a hard-line group of retired generals in a square nearby and detained about 50 participants. The group, the Soviet Officers' Union, could not be reached for comment.

The Moscow police said they detained 90 people. Some of the detainees were members of a pro-Kremlin youth group that staged a counter-demonstration, dropping leaflets from a concert hall rooftop.

Litvinovich said 130 people were detained in Moscow, including 18 who tried to enter the Kremlin through one of its guarded gates.

"Today we saw a police state and its methods," she said. Other Russia said most were released but many were ordered to appear in court later

on charges of involvement in

about a kilometer (half a mile) a prohibited public activity. It said Limonov appeared before slogans such as "Russia a judge and was fined 500 rubles (about \$18; euro13) for dispersed. Kasparov traveled

Lyudmila Morozova, 61, a nurse from the southern city of Voronezh, had planned to protest in Triumph Square but was put off by the massive police presence. She said the police actions showed that the government was afraid "some kind of power will rise against them."

"I want my country to develop along a democratic path," said Morozova, standing against a wall at the edge of the square. "It's not only not democratic, it's becoming totalitarian."

She said she has joined Solidarity.

In St. Petersburg, about 200 Other Russia supporters demonstrated at a site approved by city authorities. But local leader Olga Kurnosova said at least one organizer was detained beforehand, and St. Petersburg police said about 10 people were detained at a separate site.

Popular support for Other Russia and other vocal



Plain clothed police officers detain an opposition demonstrator during an anti-Kremlin protest in Moscow, Sunday, Dec. 14, 2008. Police thwarted an anti-Kremlin protest organized by Garry Kasparov's opposition group on Sunday, seizing demonstrators and shoving them into trucks. They detained at least 25 people including the group's co-leader.

Associated Press

opposition groups is minimal, but the Kremlin is wary about any evidence of public anger as its struggles with a potentially politically damaging economic downturn.

There has been little evidence of change in the government's heavy-handed treatment of critics since Dmitry Medvedev succeeded Putin as president

in May and stressed the importance of civil rights in his inaugural address.

Ekho Moskvy radio and Russian news agencies reported that several thousand motorists took part in protests in the Pacific coast city of Vladivostok against government plans to raise import tariffs on used cars.

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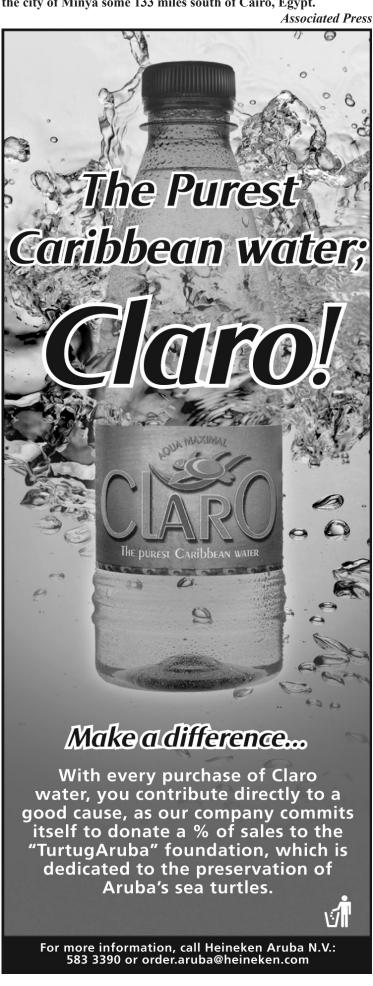
Monday through Saturday 9:30am - 6:30pm

Monday, December 15, 2008 WORLD NEWS





A truck pulls up a bus which was packed with passengers traveling along a narrow road in southern Egypt, which plunged into an irrigation canal, killing 53 people Sunday, Dec.14, 2008, close to the city of Minya some 133 miles south of Cairo, Egypt.



Egyptian bus crash ki

By SARAH EL DEEB **Associated Press Writer**

CAIRO, Egypt (AP) - A bus packed with passengers traveling along a narrow road in southern Egypt plunged into an irrigation canal, killing 57 people on Sunday, officials said.

Minya Governor Ahmed Diaa said the bus, with at least 70 passengers on board, swerved to avoid an oncoming pickup truck near a village close to the city of Minya, located about 133 miles south of Cairo

Rescuers on small boats searched the canal for passengers, and volunteers pulled bodies out of the water. A crane later lifted the bus out of the canal. One survivor told the Egyptian private television station Dream that a boat came to get him and a friend after the bus plunged into the water, but many people were unable to get out

The accident took place early Sunday at the end of a major Muslim holiday, when inter-city roads are crowded with returning vacationers. Diaa initially said 36 people were killed, but rescue efforts continued hours after the accident and he later put the death toll at 57, according to state-run television.

Egypt has a history of serious bus and car crashes because of speeding, careless driving and poor road conditions. At least 8,000 people were killed in accidents in 2006, the most recent statistics available.

Sunday's incident is one of the worst road accidents in recent months, and a prosecution team was at the scene investigating. A string of fatal accidents and fires have fueled Egyptian anger at the government because of the belief that many of the incidents are due to official negligence or poor infrastructure.

Somali president fires premier; new chaos ensues



Somalia's Islamic al-Shabab spokesman Sheik Muktar Robow Abu Mansur (C) addresses a news conference where he vowed to step up attacks against government soldiers and foreign troops in Mogadishu December 14, 2008. Somalia's President Abdullahi Yusuf sacked his prime minister on Sunday after they disagreed on a new cabinet demanded by donors, throwing his Westernbacked interim government into disarray.

Reuters Photo

MOHAMED OLAD HASSAN

Associated Press Writer

MOGADISHU, Somalia (AP) - Somalia's president fired his prime minister Sunday and accused him of paralyzing the government with "corruption, inefficiency and treason." Hours later, as the government veered toward collapse, Islamic insurgents held a brazen news conference in the capital and vowed never to negotiate with the leadership. President Abdullahi Yusuf announced his decision in Baidoa, one of the few towns the government still controls. Islamic militants accused of ties to al-Qaida have taken over most of the country.

"The government has been paralyzed by corruption, inefficiency and treason," Yusuf said. He will name a new prime minister in three days, he said.

The prime minister, Nur Hassan Hussein, promised to challenge his dismissal, saying the president lacked the authority to fire him and that Somalia itself lacked a legal government because too many ministers have already resigned.

"The president was speaking in his usual personal capacity, which is always contrary to the country's existing rules and regulations," Hussein told The Associated Press.

Later in the day, Sheik Muktar Robow, a spokesman for the al-Shabab insurgent group, held a news conference in the capital, Mogadishu, in open disregard for the government. "We will never talk to the government and will never accept any political power sharing. Our aim is only to see Islamic law running this country," Robow said.

Somalia has been without effective government since 1991, when warlords overthrew a dictatorship and then turned on one another.

Somalia is at a dangerous crossroads. Ethiopia, which has been protecting the Somali government, recently announced it would withdraw its troops by the end of this month. That will leave the government vulnerable to Islamic insurgents, began a brutal insurgency in 2007. They have captured most of southern Somalia and move freely inside the capital, Mogadishu.

In the past they have brought a semblance of security to the country, but have done it by carrying out public executions and floggings. On Saturday, fighters loyal to the most powerful arm of the Islamist movement _ al-Shabab publicly executed by firing squad two men accused of killing their parents.

WORLD NEWS | B9 | Monday, December 15, 2008

Jamaican drug bust nets 2 tons ot marijuana

KINGSTON, Jamaica (AP) - Police say they have seized more than 2 tons of marijuana stacked inside a parked truck labeled for produce. Sgt. Jubert Llewylyn says the 5,000 pounds of pot was packaged and ready to be shipped in 128 boxes stamped "Selected Jamaica Produce."

Llewylyn said Sunday that 85 pounds of hash oil also was seized. No arrests have been made.

In a record haul last year, Jamaican police in a rural town seized 15,000 pounds of marijuana in boxes that were marked "Jamaica Produce.'

The U.S. State Department says Jamaica is the largest producer of marijuana in the region and a major hub for drugs bound for the

Russian warships end polemic **Nicaragua visit**

MANAGUA, Nicaragua (AP) - A Nicaraguan army official says three Russian navy ships have left the Central American country after a brief visit here that stirred heated debate and underscored deep political divisions.

Lt. Col. Juan Morales says the destroyer Admiral Chabanenko and two support vessels left Sunday after delivering \$200,000 in medicine, computers and other humanitarian aid.

Morales denied the ships left early because of opposition to the visit. They were scheduled to leave Monday.

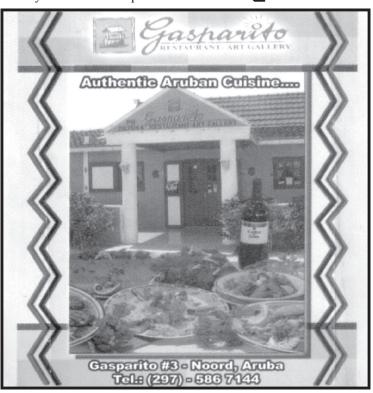
Leftist President Daniel Ortega said he was authorized to approve the visit, but opposition lawmakers argued that the constitution requires congressional approval for visits by foreign military forces

The warships previously visited ally Venezuela and sailed through the Panama Canal.

Ameican moved to Finland after Russia attack

MOSCOW (AP) - The mother of an American exchange student who was stabbed in Russia says her son has been transferred to a hospital in Finland. Eighteen-year-old Stanley Robinson, of Providence, Rhode Island, was stabbed by unknown assailants in the southern Russian city of Volgograd on Dec. 5. Robinson is black; officials say the attack may have been racially motivated. Robinson was studying Russian on a program arranged by the American Field Service, or AFS.

The organization said Saturday it had arranged his transfer to Finland, and his mother, Tina Robinson, confirmed by phone Sunday that he was hospitalized in Helsinki.



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Monday, December 15, 2008 WORLD NEWS





Cuba's President Raul Castro, left, gestures as Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez applauds during a ceremony at Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas, Saturday, Dec. 13, 2008. Castro is in Venezuela on his first international visit as Cuba's leader. Behind is a painting of Venezuela's independence hero Simon Bolivar.

Associated Press

By CHRISTOPHER TOOTHAKER

Associated Press Writer

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) - Cuban President Raul Castro spent Sunday in private meetings with socialist ally Hugo Chavez after publicly thanking the Venezuelan president for helping Cuba through difficult times.

Castro - on his first trip abroad since becoming Cuba's president - was not scheduled to appear in public the day after he and Chavez agreed to joint projects worth more than \$2 billion. Chavez, a longtime ally of Fidel Castro, gave Fidel's younger brother a warm welcome to Venezuela on Saturday, praising him for challenging U.S. "imperialism" for decades.

Castro, in turn, thanked Venezuela for increasing cooperation with the communist-led island.

"In the name of Cuba, we thank you for your solidarity with the Cuban Revolution," said the 77-year-old Castro. "We've been able to leave the difficult years behind."

Fidel Castro signed Cuba's

Raul Castro salutes Chavez in first trip as president

first cooperation agreement raising doubts about the future with Venezuela eight years of Venezuela's international largess. But Venezuela and

Raul Castro stopped first in Venezuela on his first international trip as president, a testament to Cuba's reliance on the South American nation that provides the island with oil at a discount.

Venezuela sells Cuba about 90,000 barrels of crude oil per day on preferential terms, and hopes to increase shipments to 150,000 barrels per day by 2013.

Venezuela also is the fifthlargest exporter of oil to the U.S. Washington's nearly 50year-old trade embargo against Cuba prohibits nearly all U.S. commerce with the island.

Plunging world oil prices are

raising doubts about the future of Venezuela's international largess. But Venezuela and Cuba forged ahead Saturday with plans to expand Cuba's oil refineries.

The Cuban government, meanwhile, has sent Venezuela 30,000 Cuban doctors, nurses, sports trainers and agricultural technicians.

Castro formally succeeded his ailing 82-year-old brother as Cuba's president in February, but had assumed leadership duties on an interim basis after Fidel underwent emergency intestinal surgery in July 2006.

Castro said he hopes voters approve a proposed constitutional amendment to lift limits on presidential elections and allow Chavez to run for re-election in 2012. Venezuelan election officials say the term-limits referendum could be held in March.

On Sunday, Chavez says relations between Venezuela and the United States can only improve after President George W. Bush leaves the White House.

But the Venezuelan leader, a fierce critic of Washington, said in a televised interview that bettering relations will require "patience" and "good faith."

Chavez earlier said he hopes Obama will make good on his promise to close the military prison at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba after taking office on Jan. 20.

Swedish watchdog eyes Web site naming rapists

By MALIN RISING

Associated Press Writer

STOCKHOLM, Sweden (AP) - A government watchdog in Sweden is investigating a Web site that publishes the names of convicted sex offenders for potential breach of privacy, an official said Sunday.

Data Inspection Board lawyer Jonas Agnvall said the board opened the investigation after receiving complaints about the site. The board will assess whether the publication has been done with a journalistic purpose or not.

Under Swedish law, material published with a journalistic purpose is excluded from the law that protects personal information. The Web site has been running since October and posts addresses, court documents, dates of birth and photos of convicted rapists.

"These are complicated issues," Agnvall said. "Journalistic purpose is not only reserved for traditional media."

Sweden has a long history of transparency

- allowing public access to many private documents, including court papers and information on income, marital status and college grades.

However, coordinated Web access to criminal records is controversial because some say it could trigger vigilante attacks or harm relatives of offenders.

The operators of the Web site were not available for comment Sunday. The daily newspaper Goteborgs-Posten reported Saturday that the operators Web site organizers want tougher penalties for sex offenders.

If they are charged and found guilty, they could face fines and up to two years in prison.

In the United States, Megan's Law requires that the public be able to access information about registered sex offenders. The law is named after Megan Kanka, a 7-year-old New Jersey girl who was raped and killed in 1994 by a twice-convicted sex offender who lived near her home.





WORLD NEWS B11 Monday, December 15, 2008

GRAHAM

Continued from Page B1

"One thing I learned is that when a soldier, airman or a Marine is away, the more we can take care of the family, the better they're going to be able to do their job because there's nothing worse than being deployed and having family problems," said Graham, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Graham said that when the military mobilized for the war in Iraq, about 20 percent of Guard and Reserve forces were medically disqualified. He said it wasn't smart to have "20 percent of your force out of the fight without a shot being fired." About 25 percent of the Guard and Reserves were uninsured.

In response, Graham worked with Sen. Hillary Clinton in 2005 to allow members of the Guard and Reserve to purchase health insurance for themselves and their families TRICARE, through military's health care system. Seven years after the U.S. invaded Afghanistan to oust the Taliban for hosting al-Qaida chief Osama bin Laden, the United States has a record level of some 32,000 forces in the country, and American commanders have asked for 20,000 more. Violence has soared over the last two years.

Graham, who was in the capital from Sunday through Thursday, called the challenges in Afghanistan "enormous," and said the U.S. "let some time get by" without enough focus on the country.

"It's going to get tougher before it gets better. But we have a new strategy in place. Gen. (David) Petreaus understands how to win wars," Graham said, referring to the chief of U.S. Central Command. "So I want the people of America to know we're here to make our own national security better."

The Taliban appears to be making gains in Afghanistan's provinces, and more U.S. soldiers have died in Afghanistan in 2008 than in any year since the invasion, but Graham said history shows that the momentum in conflicts can turn quickly.

In 1987, Graham said, the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the U.S. was "vigorous." By 1990, he pointed out, it was over. "Momentum for evil or good can be powerful. Things can really deteriorate fast, but things can change and I've learned that in Iraq," Graham said of the country, where violence has dropped quickly over the last year. Graham has also served time in Iraq in the Air Force Reserves.

The politician said his service

in the military has made him a better senator.

"You don't need to be in the military to be a good senator or president, but every experience you have helps you," Graham said.

Lindsey Graham gestures during an interview with the Associated Press at a U.S. base in Kabul, Afghanistan, Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2008.

Associated Press





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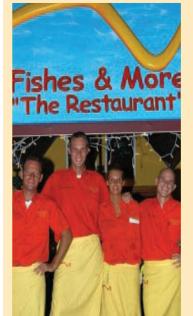


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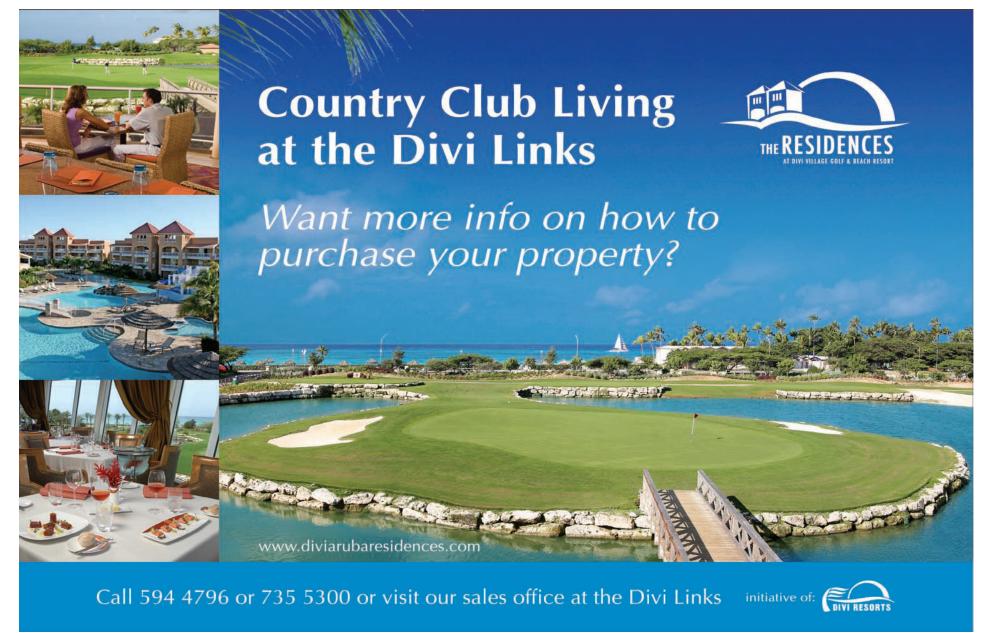
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'Day the Earth Stood Still' launches to \$31M debut

By DAVID GERMAIN,

AP Movie Writer

LOS ANGELES – Audiences sat still for Keanu Reeves' scifi remake "The Day the Earth Stood Still," making it the weekend's top movie with a \$31 million debut, according to studio estimates Sunday.

The 20th Century Fox release also added \$39 million in 90 overseas markets for a worldwide total of \$70 million.

The movie updates the 1951 tale of an alien and his giant robot enforcer who come to Earth with a warning about the consequences of humanity's destructive nature.

"Audiences are moving to see `The Day the Earth Stood Still.' It's a visually stunning movie with timely issues everybody on this planet can relate to," said Fox distribution executive Chris Aronson. "Basically, how we treat each other and how we treat this planet that we call home."

The Warner Bros. holiday romp "Four Christmases"

slipped to second place with \$13.3 million. The Reese Witherspoon-Vince Vaughn comedy raised its three-week total to \$88 million.

Another seasonal tale, Overture Films' "Nothing Like the Holidays," opened a weak No. 7 with \$3.5 million. The movie features John Leguizamo, Debra Messing and Alfred Molina in the story of a Chicago family's holiday reunion.

The overall box office plummeted compared with the same weekend last year, when "I Am Legend" opened with \$77.2 million and "Alvin and the Chipmunks" debuted with \$44.3 million. This weekend's top 12 movies took in \$83.3 million, down 45 percent from a year ago.

"This was predestined to be a down weekend given the incredible one-two punch of 'I Am Legend' and 'Alvin," said Paul Dergarabedian, president of box-office tracker Media By Numbers. "There was no way this weekend could measure up."

A rush of films opened with big numbers in limited release to qualify for the Academy Awards.

Miramax's "Doubt" pulled in \$525,030 in 15 theaters, averaging \$35,002 a cinema, compared with \$8,708 in 3,560 locations for "The Day the Earth Stood Still." The film stars Meryl Streep, Philip Seymour Hoffman and Amy Adams in a war-of-wills drama between an old-school nun and a progressive priest.

Clint Eastwood's "Gran Torino" played in six locations and took in \$284,000 to average \$47,333. The Warner Bros. film stars Eastwood as a bigot who becomes an unlikely protector for his immigrant neighbors against street thugs. The Weinstein Co. drama "The Reader" rang up \$170,000 in eight theaters for a \$21,250 average. The Holocaust-themed story stars Kate Winslet as a former concentration camp guard standing trial years later.

QueenElizabethIIreinsinextravagance as credit crunch grips

LONDON – Always concerned about staying in touch with her subjects, Queen Elizabeth II has invited the royal family to follow her example and tighten the purse strings during the financial downturn.

The 82-year-old monarch has warned her grandsons Princes William, 26, and Harry, 24 -- third and fourth in line to the throne -- that all ostentatious signs of living it up would be inappropriate, according to newspapers.

British subjects are apparently in no mood to see the young royals partying in exclusive London nightclubs while the kingdom sinks into recession, the cost of living rockets and jobs are lost.

"Whatever is the mood of the nation, she (Queen Elizabeth) tries to go along with that mood," Nicholas Davies, an author of several books on the monarchy, told AFP.

The sovereign has a personal fortune of 320 million pounds (475 million dollars, 355 million euros), according to The Sunday Times newspaper's 2008 Rich List, but is not a spendthrift.

"She's not a flamboyant character and never has been," Davies said.

"She is not someone who has gone and spoiled her children, because she doesn't believe in spoiling them. She would expect them all (the other royals) to follow her example this Christmas.

"Children or grand-children, they will all behave in the same way. It is unlikely that this coming season we will see William and Harry going out to nightclubs, getting blind drunk and fooling around with attractive girls."

Adapting to the credit crunch should not be difficult for Queen Elizabeth, who has long since garnered a reputation for looking after the pennies.

For example, she insists that the Buckingham Palace lights are turned off when rooms are vacated and left-overs from banquets are re-used.

Annual head of state expenditure has dropped from 87.3 million pounds in 1991-1992 to 40 million pounds in 2007-2008.

In mid-October this year, during her state visit to Slovakia and Slovenia, she showed how she has cut back her wardrobe expenditure as a nod to the tougher times enveloping her subjects.

For a state banquet in the the Slovene capital Ljubljana, the queen asked her dressmakers to make her a formal gown out of some material she was given more than 20 years ago during a tour of the Middle East.

For her walkabout in the city centre, she wore a red outfit already seen at an official engagement in April. In Slovakia, she appeared in the same pink wool outfit that she wore on Easter Sunday.

Normally, etiquette demands that the queen never wears the same outfit twice.

However, the press believes Her Majesty is a convert to "credit crunch couture", or fashion for those whose clothing spending has been hit by the financial downturn.



Includes: Fishing Gear, Bait, Refreshment, Rum Punch, Sandwich.



COMMENTARY B15 Monday December 1

Monday, December 15, 2008



Jesse Jackson Jr. Should Bow Out for Obama's Seat

Earl Ofari Hutchinson

Illinois Congressman Jesse Jackson Jr. should bow out of contention for Obama's Senate seat. True there is yet no evidence that he offered to grease Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich's palm in return for the seat. But there's a continuing probe into whether a Jackson family member or associates acted as Jackson's paymasters to Blagojevich. The probe, the suspicions, and the time he has spent in his defense have hopelessly tainted him as a credible candidate for the seat. He should also withdraw because Blagojevich's alleged funny money dealings has tossed too ugly a glare on Chicago's wheel and deal, borderline legal racketeering politics. The whispers and rumors about Jackson Jr. will swirl no matter what the FBI and the U.S. attorney ultimately decide about the extent of his involvement in the scandal.

But this is really less important than the accusation against him. In politics, especially Chicago politics, protests of innocence to wrongdoing are not the same as innocence. Jackson Jr. is not just a Chicago politician. He's an African-American politician who carries his famed father's namesake. The elder Jackson who was also mentioned in the allegation of seat tampering is no stranger to controversy. That's enough to further stir suspicions. It's still race, however, that makes Jackson Jr.'s innocence or not most problematic. When black elected officials are accused of wrongdoing. the presumption of guilt hangs heavily in the air. That's in part because the recent corruption scandals that have snared former Louisiana Democrat William Jefferson and Birmingham mayor Larry Langford have been plastered over the news. The cloud of suspicion is there in part too because in a few celebrated cases when they're indicted, jailed, accused of financial improprieties or ethics violations (as in the case of Georgia Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney, who initially screamed race when she took a swing at a Capitol Police officer) the fingered officials have made race the centerpiece of their defense. During the 1990s, former Illinois

Congressman Mel Reynolds screamed racism when he was indicted, tried and convicted of sexual assault charges. Washington D.C. Mayor Marion Barry screamed racism when he was indicted, tried and convicted on a drug charge. California Congressman Walter Tucker, convicted of bribery charges, loudly shouted racism.

When they're popped, they wail that they should not be held to a higher standard of accountability than white officials who get caught with their hand in the corruption cookie jar. When white politicians are jailed and pay hefty fines for violating campaign finance and ethics laws, nobody says that they have to be a cross between Mother Teresa and St. Paul.

However, even if Jackson is a victim of a slightly kooky governor as he and others claim, that still doesn't absolve him of holding to a standard that leaves not the slightest doubt that he is above reproach. He represents the majority black Second Congressional District. His constituents view him not as other politicians, but as a leader and advocate. They look to him to represent their interests and to confront institutional power. Any legal smear on him, no matter how questionable that soils his name makes it much harder for blacks to retain confidence in them.

This diminishes their political power and influence, creating distrust and dissension among black voters. Jackson publicly pleaded to get his good name back. He knows full well that a taint, any taint, can hamper his ability to do his job. He has an even bigger burden than other black politicians who carry the same cross. His father insured that. The long and storied years of civil rights crusading by Jackson Sr. markedly increased expectations that his son would not be solely a legislative fighter but also a champion for the rights of the underdog, who in this case, happen to be many of his constituents. Jackson to his credit did not reflexively try to deflect, dodge, and muddy the charges and accusations against him by screaming "racism."

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My journey to find comfort in the cold

By Diane Cameron

Guilderland, N.Y.-I wake in the night and listen. The reassuring rumble tells me that the furnace is still on. It's good news and bad. It means we have heat and there's still oil, but it might just as well be dollar bills that I'm burning.

I don't fall back to sleep easily. My fear of cold has an ancient echo. I listen for the furnace at night the way my Polish ancestors woke in their huts to check on the fire. We're told that global warming is a threat, but it's a danger I'd settle for on days like this.

In many wedding albums, there is a picture of the groom carrying the bride over the threshold. That odd custom is also about staying warm. In ancient times, when a woman left her father's home and was set down on the hearth in her new house she was in the most important spot in any ancient home. She literally kept the home fires burning.

Temperature is part of my own married romance. Coming to New York from Baltimore – where there is just one decent snowstorm each year – I, too, was set down on a new hearth.

My husband, Peter, comes from northern Ontario, where winter runs from September to May and wind chill is scoffed at. "When Canadians have 30 below, they mean it," he says. "Wind chill is for wimps."

So to marry this tundra man I had to learn to dress for serious cold. To get me from Baltimore's Inner Harbor to Albany's frozen Hudson, Peter plied me with jackets and sweaters, scarves and gloves, even a hat with earflaps. The gift of Sorel boots – toasty at Canada's 30 below, was a sign we were getting serious.

That first winter together, living in upstate New York, I thought I'd die. My boots were good below freezing, but my fingers could barely tie them. Physical acclimation is real, but it came slowly. Each year gets a bit easier. Now I complain about the cold, but no longer imagine myself as part of the Donner party. But there is also emotional acclimation to cold. A quote of French author Albert Camus is taped inside the cabinet where I get my coffee mug each morning. It says: "In the depth of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer." Some days that tells me that I have enough beach memories to cling to on freezing days and other days it is the word "invincible" that reminds me that living cold does indeed build character. But having a warm house is important. I can't swear that my first marriage ended solely over the thermostat setting, but for years I never went on a second date with a man whose response to my "I'm cold," was, "Put on a sweater." Now I'm married to a man who knows that cold hands do not mean a warm heart, and that a big oil bill is better than roses. But surprisingly, I've grown, too. I am willing, in this new life and climate, to go look for that cost-saving sweater.

Monday, December 15, 2008 SPORTS

Aruba—TODAY

Sorenstam ends career with birdie at Dubai Ladies

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) - Annika Sorenstam ended her stellar career by making an eight-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole Sunday to complete a 1-under 71 that was only good for seventh place at the Dubai Ladies Masters - six shots behind winner Anja Monke.

Sorenstam, who is retiring to focus on her family and business interests, led the tournament after the second round but her hopes for a third straight title at the season-ending tournament on the Ladies European Tour faded with a 75 Saturday.

Still, the Swede managed to end on a positive note with her final birdie to a standing ovation from a packed gallery, raising her putter to acknowledge the crowd before hugging caddie Terry McNamara.

"I have had many farewells since I announced my decision some five months back, but this one was special," Sorenstam said. "I started my career with LET, and it is fitting to end it with an LET event.

"I felt at peace. I really felt very content. I walked up to hit my



Annika Sorenstam waves to fans after the end of the final of Dubai Ladies Masters golf tournament in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Sunday, Dec. 14, 2008. Sorenstam brought the curtain down on her 15-year career Sunday by finishing in a five-way tie for seventh place at the Dubai Ladies Masters.

Associated Press

third shot on the 18th, and I felt the breeze coming in, and it was just a really comfortable feeling.

I saw some players standing behind the 18th green, that

gave me a tear. I saw my parents and my family and that give me a tear."

Monke shot a 68 to protect her overnight lead, finishing with a 13-under 275 total.

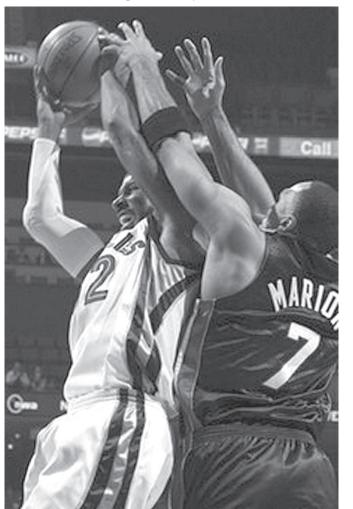
Veronica Zorzi of Italy was second, three strokes behind the German, with British veteran Laura Davies another shot back in third.

"I'm feeling very happy,"

Monke said, adding that it was tough to focus on her own game rather than on Sorenstam. "Of course I heard the big applause when she was hitting her shot into the 18th green. I was on the 16th green at the time. And then we saw her actually finishing it off on 18. We hit our tee shots by that time and so I could at least see a little bit."

Sorenstam said she was a little nervous Sunday morning and came to the course a bit earlier to stretch and reflect on the day. But once she hit her first shot, she said it was "automatic."

"I know the time is right, and therefore I feel very happy," Sorenstam said. "If you think about 15 years and all of the things I've achieved, it's sad. But you close one door and you open another one. I'm glad I have a chance to do that."



NBA Roundup

West scores 29 in Hornets' 99-91 win over Raptors

TORONTO (AP) - David West scored 29 points and James Posey made six 3-pointers and had 20 points as the New Orleans Hornets beat the Toronto Raptors 99-91 on Sunday for their eighth win in 10 games.

Rasual Butler added 16 points, and Chris Paul had 12 points and 12 assists for the Hornets, 12-of-33 from 3-point range. Chris Bosh had 25 points for Toronto.

Spurs 109, Thunder 104

At San Antonio, Tony Parker scored 22 points, and Tim Duncan had 20 points and 12 rebounds

Memphis Grizzlies guard O.J. Mayo grabs an offensive rebound while defended by Miami Heat forward Shawn Marion in the first quarter of an NBA basketball game Sunday, Dec. 14, 2008, in Memphis, Tenn. Marion was called for a loose-ball foul on the play.

Associated Press

in San Antonio's seventh straight victory.

Matt Bonner added 17 points, and Roger Mason had 14 for the Spurs. Jeff Green led the Thunder (2-23) with 33 points, and Kevin Durant had 28.

Grizzlies 102, Heat 86

At Memphis, Tennessee, O.J. Mayo scored 28 points, and Rudy Gay added 18 to help Memphis beat Miami for its fourth straight win, the Grizzlies' longest winning streak since the final five games of the 2005-06 season.

Michael Beasley led Miami with 20 points. Dwyane Wade had 17 on 5-of-16 shooting.





Aruba TODAY

Steelers rally to beat Ravens 13-9, win AFC North

BALTIMORE (AP) - Santonio Holmes caught a 4-yard touchdown pass from Ben Roethlisberger with 43 seconds left as the Pittsburgh Steelers clinched their second consecutive American Football Conference North crown by beating the Baltimore Ravens 13-9 Sunday.

The Steelers (11-3) trailed 9-6 before moving 92 yards in 13 plays to take their only lead and score the game's lone touchdown. Roethlisberger went 7-for-11 for 89 yards on the drive.

Last week, Pittsburgh used a 17-point fourth quarter to rally past Dallas 20-13. The Steelers have won five straight, and this was their first win in Baltimore since 2002. It also earned the Steelers a first-round bye.

Matt Stover kicked three field goals for the Ravens (9-5), who remain in the wild-card hunt despite being eliminated from the AFC North race.

Colts 31, Lions 21

At Indianapolis, Despite a litany of missed tackles and two lost fumbles, Peyton Manning kept Indiana (10-4) on track for a playoff run, and kept the Detroit (0-14) on track for a winless year.

The Lions, seemingly on their way to the first 0-16 season in NFL history, were victimized in the fourth quarter by Manning and the Colts.

The win was Indy's seventh straight and assured the Colts of a seventh straight season with double-digit victories. More important, it also put Indy on the cusp of earning a seventh consecutive playoff bid.

Texans 13, Titans 12

At Houston, Andre Johnson atoned for one of the worst games of his career in Houston's first meeting with Tennessee this season with a career-high 207 yards and a touchdown to lead the Texans to their fourth consecutive win.

Kris Brown kicked two field goals for Houston.

Panthers 30, Broncos 10

At Charlotte, North Carolina, the Panthers finished off a perfect regular season at home with a dominating performance to clinch at least a tie for the NFC South title and moving closer to their first playoff berth in three years.

Four days after it was announced

Jerry Richardson needs a heart transplant, he checked out of the hospital and was in his familiar spot in his end zone suite, watching Steve Smith and DeAngelo Williams power Carolina (11-3).

Vikings 35, Cardinals 14

At Glendale, Arizona, Tarvaris Jackson got another shot at starting quarterback, and boy did he make the most of it. Playing in place of injured Gus Frerotte, Jackson threw for four touchdowns and the Vikings stayed alone atop the NFC North.

Adrian Peterson rushed for 165 yards on 28 carries, his franchise record ninth 100-yard game of the season for the Vikings (9-5), who won their fourth in a row. They can clinch the division title with another victory or loss by Chicago.

Dolphins 14, 49ers 9

At Miami, the Dolphins had possession for less than 22 minutes but held the opposition without a touchdown for the third game in a row and helped its playoff chances.

The 49ers ran 79 plays to 42 for the Dolphins, but Miami tight ends scored the only touchdowns on first-half passes from Chad Pennington. He threw a 61-yarder to David Martin and a 19-yarder to rookie Joey Haynos, making the first reception of his career.

Jets 31, Bills 27

At East Rutherford, New Jersey, Abram Elam sacked J.P. Losman and Shaun Ellis picked up the fumble and rumbled 11 yards into the end zone with 1:54 left for the go-ahead score.

The Jets (9-5) will win the AFC East with victories in their finals two games, against Seattle and Miami.

Patriots 49, Raiders 26

At Oakland, California, Randy Moss caught two of Matt Cassel's career-high four touchdown passes in his first game against the Raiders since his trade to New England last season.

Cassel's sterling performance just six days after the death of his father, Greg, kept the Patriots (9-5) in a three-way tie for first place in the AFC East with Miami and the Jets. Cassel left the team briefly during the week to be with his family, but looked sharp Sunday.

Falcons 13, Buccaneers 10, OT

At Atlanta, Michael Turner ran for 152 yards, John Abraham had three sacks and Jason Elam kicked a 34-yard field goal in overtime.

Atlanta twice turned it over near the Tampa Bay end zone and had a huge breakdown on special teams, allowing Tampa Bay to block a punt with less than 3 minutes left in regulation. That set up Matt Bryant's tying field goal with 48 seconds left.

Bengals 20, Redskins 13

At Cincinnati, the Redskins lost for the fifth time in six games, unable to keep up with one of the NFL's lowliest teams. Ryan Fitzpatrick ran for a touchdown and threw for another.

The main intrigue was how the Redskins (7-7) would react to injuries that decimated their offensive line and grumbling by running back Clinton Portis that rippled through the locker room. They held a players-only meeting at midweek after Portis derisively called coach Jim Zorn a "genius" for benching him the previous week.

Chargers 22, Chiefs 21

At Kansas City, Missouri, Philip Rivers rallied San Diego from a 21-3 third-quarter deficit, throwing two touchdown passes in the final 73 seconds.

The Chiefs (2-12), helped by a delay-of-game penalty against the Chargers, tried a 50-yard field goal on the final play, but Connor Barth's kick was wide left

Rivers, who came in with an NFL-best 102.0 passer rating, was 34-for-48 for 346 yards with two touchdowns and one interception.

Jaguars 20, Packers 16

At Jacksonville, Florida, David Garrard threw two touchdowns passes, Maurice Jones-Drew scored twice and the Jaguars snapped a four-game losing streak.

The Packers (5-9) lost on a late drive for the third consecutive week. Carolina beat Green Bay 35-31 two weeks ago with a 55-yard drive in the final two minutes. Houston kicked a winning field goal as time expired to win 24-21 last week.

Seahawks 23, Rams 20

At St. Louis, Olindo Mare's 27-yard field goal as time expired lifted the Seahawks, who broke a six-game slide. Seattle (3-11) tied the game on T.J. Duckett's 1-yard run with 2:47 to go.





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Monday, December 15, 2008 SPORTS

Aruba TODAY

klahoma quarterback Bradford wins Heisman Trophy



Oklahoma football player Sam Bradford holds the Heisman Trophy after he was presented the award at a ceremony Saturday, Dec. 13, 1008 in New York.

Associated Press By RALPH D. RUSSO

AP College Football Writer NEW YORK – The first person congratulate Heisman Trophy winner Sam Bradford was the player who won it last

year — Tim Tebow.

The star quarterbacks from the top two teams in the country shook hands Saturday night, then embraced.

On Jan. 8, with the national

won't be so cordial.

Bradford, Oklahoma's amazingly accurate quick-thinking passer, won the Heisman after leading the highest-scoring team in major college history to the BCS title game. A year after Tebow was the first sophomore to win the Heisman, Bradford became the second and kept the Florida star from joining Archie Griffin as the only two-time winners.

Bradford and Tebow will soon meet again, when the No. 2 Sooners (12-1) face No. 1 Gators (12-1) in Miami.

"We're ready to get back to work to get ready for the 8th," Bradford said. "When we started this season, winning the national championship was the first goal we put down as a team."

Next month's game between Oklahoma and Florida marks the second time Heisman winners will play against each other. The first was in the 2005 Orange Bowl, when '04 winner Matt Leinart and Southern California beat '03 winner Jason White and Oklahoma for the national title.

championship on the line, it Bradford, who leads the nation in touchdown passes with 48, received 1,726 points. Texas quarterback Colt McCoy was second with 1,604 and Tebow — who received the most first-place votes — was third with 1,575 points.

> "I was definitely surprised and I think it's everything I imagined," said Bradford, who raised the 25-pound bronze statue with his left hand still in a cast from a recent surgery. "I think it will take a couple weeks to set in."

> Bradford got 300 first-place votes, McCoy 266 and Tebow 309. Not since 1956 had a player drawn the most firstplace votes and finished third; Tommy McDonald of Oklahoma holds that distinction.

> Bradford was the third person to win without receiving the most first-place votes, joining Notre Dame's Paul Hornung in '56 and Oklahoma's Billy Sims in 1978.

Any consolation, Tim?

"Not really," he said with a smile. "You lose, you lose.

"We still get to play in January and decide something a little bit bigger."

It was the closest margin between the top two since Nebraska's Eric Crouch edged Florida's Rex Grossman by 62 points in 2001. The only other time the gap between first and third was smaller was also '01, when Miami's Ken Dorsey was 142 points behind Crouch.

"Now I know what it's like for those people on 'American Idol," McCoy said. "My heart was pounding."

The award ceremony was held at the Nokia Theatre in Times Square. When it was over, the finalists were whisked downtown with a police escort, about 50 blocks to the Sports Museum of America in lower Manhattan for a news conference.

"I was really nervous," Bradford said during his news conference. "I'd much rather play in front of 100,000 people than wait for an award to be handed out."

The Big 12 South was the epicenter of college football this season, with both the national championship race and Heisman chase turning weekly on games played by its three powerhouse teams.

McCoy was the early Heisman front-runner after leading the Longhorns to the No. 1 ranking with a victory against Oklahoma in October. Texas Tech's Graham Harrell, who finished a distant fourth in Heisman voting, then moved to the forefront after he tossed a last-second, game-winning touchdown pass to beat Texas a month later.

But Bradford closed strongest, leading his team to a string of blowout victories, including one against Texas Tech, and a spot — even if it was somewhat controversial — in the BCS title game.

Bradford leads the nation in passer rating (186.3) and has thrown for 4,464 yards, directing the Sooners' fastpaced, no-huddle offense.

Oklahoma has already racked up 702 points to blow past the record of 656 set by Hawaii in 2006, and last week the Sooners became the first major college team in 89 years to score at least 60 in five straight games.



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SPORTS B19 Monday, December 15, 2008

Avery, Stars parting ways

By JAIME ARON AP Sports Writer

DALLAS (AP) - Sean Avery's days with the Dallas Stars are done.

Although the combative forward was eligible to return from a six-game suspension Sunday, the Stars instead announced Avery will not rejoin the team - ever.

"All parties said there is a clear understanding that a return to the Stars is not in the best interest of either the hockey club or Avery," the team said in a news release.

Details of his departure still must be worked out. He could be traded, sent to the minors or bought out next summer. The club said it will work with Avery to try making this an amicable divorce.

However, there's no telling when Avery will even be ready to play again. He is at an undisclosed location seeking treatment through a program set up by the NHL players association. When he was suspended, Avery told the Stars he needed help dealing with anger issues.

"Sean needs to focus on his own well-being while the Stars hockey team must focus on playing hockey and competing for a playoff spot," Stars cogeneral manager Brett Hull said in the statement. "We all need to move forward."

Avery lasted only 23 games in Dallas after being signed for \$15.5 million and four years over the summer. The Stars could try voiding the contract by saying he violated a conduct clause, but aren't going to do that, in part because of the likely legal challenges that would ensue.

"The message here is: no distractions," Hull said. "Sean can focus on resolving his personal issues, and the Stars will have closure on this episode."

Avery _ a two-time league leader in penalty minutes who delights in being called the NHL's most-hated player was suspended by commissioner Gary Bettman only hours after he made a crude remark about ex-girlfriends dating other hockey players. The Stars were in Calgary, Alberta, and Flames defenseman Dion Phaneuf is dating actress Elisha Cuthbert. Avery also has dated supermodel-actress Rachel Hunter, who is now dating Los Angeles' Jarret Stoll.

Avery's comment came on Dec. 2 to reporters waiting to discuss comments he'd made about another Flames player, former scoring champion Jarome Iginla.

Dallas coach Dave Tippett was especially upset because Avery defied him by even speaking to reporters then. The next day, Tippett made it clear he didn't want Avery back. Team leaders Mike Modano and Marty Turco also have left no doubt Avery is not welcome in the dressing room.

In this Nov. 8, 2008, file photo, Dallas Stars center Sean Avery looks to pass the puck against the San Jose Sharks during the first period of an NHL hockey game in San Jose, Calif. Avery was eligible to return from a sixgame suspension Sunday, but the Stars instead announced Avery will not rejoin the team.

Associated Press





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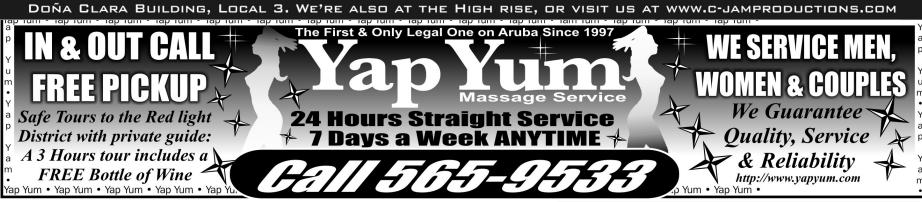
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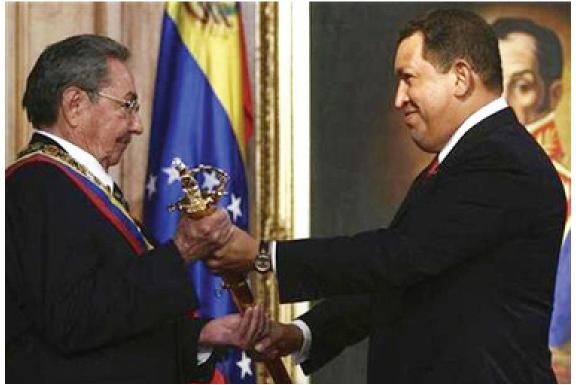
Venezuela y Cuba reafirman lazos con visita de Raúl Castro

CARACAS (Reuters) Venezuela y Cuba reafirmaron el sábado su estrecha alianza ideológica y comercial con la visita del presidente cubano, Raúl Castro, que eligió a Caracas para realizar su primer viaje al extranjero desde que asumió el poder en la isla caribeña.

De traje gris y lentes oscuros, Castro fue recibido con los respectivos honores de jefe de Estado por el presidente Hugo Chávez, para posteriormente reunirse a discutir nuevos acuerdos bilaterales entre la isla y su principal socio comercial.

visitante alabó los mecanismos de integración logrados en los últimos años entre ambas naciones y agradeció a Chávez su solidaridad con la revolución cubana, que dijo ha podido superar los años difíciles del bloqueo por parte de Estados Unidos.

"Ello se debe no sólo a nuestra unidad y espíritu de resistencia sino también al decisivo apoyo recibido de la Venezuela bolivariana", dijo durante un acto protocolar.



El mandatario venezolano, Hugo Chávez (derecha), entrega al líder cubano, Raúl Castro, una réplica de la espada del héroe nacional Simón Bolívar en el palacio de Miraflores en Caracas, 13 dic 2008. REUTERS/Miraflores Palace/Handout (VENEZUELA).

internacional de Raúl Castro desde que reemplazó en el poder a mediados del 2006 a su hermano Fidel, afectado por problemas de salud.

Pese a no tener una relación tan estrechacomoconsulegendario hermano, a quien Chávez llama su padre ideológico,

La visita fue el debut el mandatario venezolano alaba frecuentemente en sus discursos a Raúl y a la revolución cubana.

> Chávez aprovechó el encuentro para hacer un recuento histórico de la trayectoria de los hermanos Castro y llamó a Raúl su "tío". "Aquí estamos Cuba y Venezuela

modestamente cumpliendo el papel que nos ha asignado el tiempo histórico, la geografía y el impulso de nuestros pueblos", afirmó Chávez.

Posteriormente, enfundado en traje negro, Castro rindió honores al héroe de la independencia venezolana Simón Bolívar y recibió las llaves de Caracas, antes de dirigirse junto a su homólogo al palacio de Gobierno de Miraflores, para su encuentro formal.

La reunión entre los dos líderes anticapitalistas y enemigos de Washington se da en momentos en que la crisis financiera global ha impactado los precios del petróleo, lo que podría obligar a Venezuela a replantearse sus proyectos e inversiones en el extranjero. Caracas envía 92.000 barriles diarios de crudo a Cuba en condiciones preferenciales de financiamiento. Además ha prometido inversiones en manufactura y energía. La Habana paga parte de la factura petrolera con el servicio de más de 30.000 médicos У enfermeros enviados a Venezuela.

Las delegaciones firmaron un memorando de acuerdo por 173 proyectos, 137 de los cuales ya están en desarrollo, que ascenderían a unos 2.000 millones de dólares. Además signaron otros dos cartas de intención para crear empresas en el área energética y de tecnología.



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